

**THE  
SILVER  
ROSE**



O lord! Thou beloved of Gauri! Deign to accept this – the maiden of poesy – adorned with the ornaments of various figures of speech, charming by the gait of beautiful diction, possessing the virtuous conduct of excellent meters, having the bright complexion of sweet sound, praised by the world of good men constituted of holy sages, endowed with the amorous sentiment of devotion together with the virtue of loftiness, planned with the suitor of Brahman as an objective, invested with the most auspicious marks of high literary qualities endowed with numerous brilliant decorations of the literary art, revealing the modesty of poetic humility bearing the ‘wealth-line’ of clear meanings, & possessing the virtue of working for the good of the readers

**Sri Sankaracarya**

## BENEVENUTO

I am the Silver Rose & in these words confide  
Tis better to have lived than to have died  
& all these lives of highlights that we lead  
Preserve them in soft pots where poets store their mead

Occasions rise betwyx two kindred minds,  
Whose love of poesia absolute  
Lifts them up 'raptured, whom in numbers finds,  
A marching drummer & a lilting lute!

To thee I leave my sonnetry in trust,  
Dear reader, as in these I'm still alive,  
Tho' most of them must join me in the dust,  
Perhaps a better handful will survive

When, tho' my soul in *this* no longer grows,  
While we share *this* still lives the *Silver Rose*.

## MODERN LIFE

At this stage of Mankind's devolution,  
We live in an age of air pollution,  
Fat-cats & taxes, taxi fares, faxes,  
Serial killers, silky leg waxes,  
Condoms, modems, gimmicks, gadgets, gizmos  
Two rubber ducks & comic book heroes,  
Football... rock & roll... catwalk... movie stars,  
Recession, depression & wonder bras,  
Four packs & prozac, pylon countryside,  
Anarchist daughter, schoolboy suicide,  
Just-add-water, slaughter of Mother Earth,  
Demise of religion, occult rebirth,  
Not one inch left of this globe to explore,  
The whole world itchin' for its third World War!

## DOROTHY ROAD

There's no gas, electricity or water in my bohemian paradise  
Section Six in the window of a townhouse caravan  
Five grand fine or six months if you try & drag me out  
Decorated by wicked paintings some artist left in the attic  
Furnished by street rummages & the local Oasis shop  
I mean, I transported my fuckin' bed up in pieces on the busses  
Cookery on a calor gas stove - paper plates & plastic cutlery  
No brain-rotting TV - just Classic FM on a cheap shower radio  
Snap & crackle of an open fire fuell'd by wood from the skips  
Exercise: a home-made hockey pitch in an empty room downstairs  
Tesco's toilets, job centre phones, Battersea library's internet  
Britain's largest sports screen at Clapham's old Grand Cinema  
Tuesday's pay-what-you-like theatre at the Latchmere & BAC  
& for washing a wicked swimming pool with a slack front desk

## COMMUTER LOVE

She shivers in vain under the old clock tower  
Drizzle spate, lover late, fizzling date

*"The 17.17 from Dover Priory  
Has been diverted via Bat & Ball..."*

She walks morbidly into Unwins  
Buys a bottle of cheap red Chianti  
To take home to its depressing glass

Tonight she'll romance Albert Square  
& a fisherman's pie from Tescoes  
Laced with white-hot jallapeno...

Then... the EUREKA knock at the door  
& Terrence will stand there, slick-soaked hair  
& say, *"Sorry, Daphne, I've had a total nightmare!"*

*"Drive next time!"* she'll whisper, kissing him prodigiously.

## INNER CITY LIFE

*In London every person is a passing thought...*

In cities every tree is a weeping willow  
Drooping sadly in the poisonous air,  
Airless stacks are the soul-sapping pillow  
Where only money-mongers seem to care.

The M25 means captivity,  
I mean, what is there left to delight us,  
Lust-for-life crush'd through blind servility  
Barely sooth'd by these dancey all-nighters!

Traffic encircles concrete conurbations,  
Mobiles by the millions melt the mind,  
Germs breed in the underground stations,  
This microcosmic mirror of mankind.

*In London every person is a passing thought...*

## REJUVENATIONS

Time has swung swift to this un-noticed hour  
here is a shift in her most dearest care  
now at the dawn of age I am aware  
little of life is truly in our power.  
O for a lizard & a wizard tower!  
to launch a Pegasus on swooning air  
far from parades of this, the daily wear,  
when little lives, in an instant, grow sour  
to give so much, to give & give some more,  
to strive in flux, to strive with writhing soul,  
to banish from the mind the thoughts that gnaw  
to keep the faith when others may lose theirs  
& heed an inner call, however small,  
shall set a person right in life's affairs?



## NOW THAT I AM TWENTY FIVE

Now the landlords shouted, "*Sup up!*" at some jam night down Camden,  
Time has come for me to sum up some cool shit which have done;  
I have had three hundred ladies, & some of 'em together,  
Played football round the counties proudly for mi Lancashire,  
I have caught the Tallin ferry, composed poesy midst Pompeii,  
Trudged through muddy Glastonbury off my nut to see Brown play,  
I have master'd Fare Evasion, troubadour'd through all my crimes  
*(Except fer one 'boitelle du vin' they reported in the Times),\**  
I have watched my team at Wembley, been a champion at chess,  
Dodg'd the workplace prison mis'ry, nigh six years free now from stress,  
I have writ a wicked album, formed a company of kings,  
Chased romantic ghosts through Belgium... these, & many other things,  
For I'm flush with understanding what it means to be alive -  
With a spirit so demanding now that I am Twenty Five!

\* September 15th 2000

## ROSIE

Twas a quintessential English evening  
All about town & the capital's core,  
On my arm a wonderful flutterling  
Perfectly amenable to the tour.

We met in a wine-bar off Trafalgar  
Then delv'd within a cosy eaterie,  
To take our places at the theatre  
In the company of Dame Christie.

Then... the night brimm'd a goblet romantic  
& our spirits, yes, they sparkl'd as the stars,  
Dabbling with the gentle alcoholic,  
Floating, flirting, thro' my favourite bars...

Then to the chiming of the Big Ben Bells  
We caught the last train down to Tunbridge Wells

## THE GENTLEMAN'S ART OF GOOD WOOING

Sir, just as sea-galleons need proper manning  
To act like a stallion needs dapper planning  
Ride out in the morning, find snappy new shirt  
Fine wine & fresh watermelons for a private desert

Whether up in the Andes, or by the Atlantic,  
Reserve a nice table with view *quite* romantic  
& if in the city seek art, tho' not too much,  
For sitting still together allows two hearts to touch

& sir, to get the best out of screwing  
Try the Gentlemans Art of Good Wooing  
For a woman well-wooded in her bloom  
Is a vixen when moved to the bedroom

Where kissing her neck-line with thrilling caress  
Soon comes her bloom's plucking... her petals' undress.

## YOUNG LOVERS

There is nothing like a writhing woman  
Astride the throbbing member of her man  
When both of them, in panting unison,  
Are climbing to a symbiotic scream,  
& all the florid energies between  
That first flesh-lock & silence satisfied.

Her bosom heaving & in full control  
She rode my phallus to its full climax  
O verve of man's first sin, lust & romance  
Express'd in its most physical conjoin  
While thrusting cunnies subtly pleasure both.

Thro' clench & kiss we learn how to make love,  
    Until the wondrous woosiness of passion  
    Embraces both in drowsy sweetness sound.

## PILLOW TALK

She begs me for more, her eyes burning wild,

*'We make love again?'*

*'Not tonight my child,  
Great lovers make love all night with such verve,  
Poets love beauty but once to preserve.'*

Now that the wildfires of passion are gone  
We lie, two lovers, welded into one...

I pledge myself *'Cavalier Servente,'*  
Whisp'ring the Vita Nuova of Dante  
Fingertips stroking lips, nipples & thighs

*'So beautiful...'*

She sighs, closing her eyes,  
Capturing moments forever to keep  
Wandering into dream regions of sleep  
Growing a glowing halo,

I propose,  
*'O marry me til morn my darling Rose!'*

## THE ROSE OF LOVE ABANDONED

Best to begin day wrapp'd within the arms  
Of some naked angel, her breathless sleep  
Dreams darling skies, sweet children of my charms.

Through draperies morn's airy beamlets peep,  
Light this vestal vision in duvet bliss,  
I stroke olive skin, soft as springtime snow,  
As on her forehead plant I tender kiss...

She stirs! she sleeps...

Alas, tis time to go,  
Leaving her dreaming of stars & comets,  
Shall I be lovely, aye I shall compose  
Heartbreaking, her, this ache-parting sonnet,  
My mind's immemorial impression,  
Soft lines left amidst curls on her cushion.

## ROSY DAWN

Provençal buglers spill through morning sky  
With tones of man & all his myriads,  
Stood tip-toe on a nobler watch am I,  
The period of these epylliads,  
Planted within the soil of sonnetry,  
Lore-nurtured, glazed in gloried eaglesong,  
Has rais'd her stakes, chord-scented poetry  
Must play the river card for right or wrong.

Not for prosaic titles do we write,  
Nor flitting fame shall guide our appetite,  
But poets take a bow toward their souls,  
& now, as topics turn to speckl'd scrolls  
Around my neck now hangs the Silver Rose  
As in my mind this great adventure grows.

## THIS IS MY COUNTRY

Good Morning Great Britain

Still great, still Britain

The sun is shining, 10:45 AM

£296.26 pence in my pocket

Time to bet it all on black & hit the road again

But if time is a mere scratch & life is nothing  
& nothing that occurs is of the slightest importance

From Aberdeen to Birmingham, Arundel & Deal

From Dullis Hill to Rotherham, Bristol & Peel

From Inverness to Liverpool, Leeds & Palmer's Green

From Lewisham to Padiham & all the pubs between

From Badminton to Twickenham & Barton-in-the Beans

From mud, thro blood to the green fields beyond

This is my time,

This is my rhyme,

This is my country!

## CALVERLY

As the Tesco truck thunders back to base  
I find serendipity's space,  
A certain elegance claims the crescent  
Like Pimms, poetry & pheasant.

Yonder, in old Decimus Burton's park,  
Sun-scouts of Spring waken the lark,  
Gracious nature constructs a spacious wreath,  
Am I far from the swarthy heath?

I stroll the pleasant-peopl'd promenade,  
Bask in each canopied facade  
Of villas conjoin'd in Thamsian curve,  
Mansion'd with Italian verve.

May I return with the lush blooms of May  
For the roads here seem so far away.

## COURTING CALLIOPE

I started off my journey in the South,  
Catching a feeling in the country roads,  
England's unrivall'd garden all-surround,  
Beloved stretch of heavenlies unbound,  
I pass'd thro Eridge, yon the Forgewood Burn  
& step-by-step felt change investing soul,  
An hour of velvet wonder in my youth,  
Where first flew epic poetry, erstwhile,  
The world bestrode its new Millenium,  
Inspirational, talismanic times,  
Idyllic launchpad of my lofty muse,  
Commingling with the ocean drifts of life,  
An architect to all I plan to build  
Beyond this day, as Arks of life set sail.

**TRAINING IN THE ART OF FARE EVASION :  
THE FADER CODE**

- 1 Remain alert
- 2 Always keep your cool
- 3 Trust your instincts
- 4 Never show your money
- 5 Know your stations
- 6 Another five minutes won't hurt in the loo
- 7 Know your enemy
- 8 Know your postcodes
- 9 The train's going there anyway
- 10 When in doubt, clout
- 11 The train always comes when you're skinnin' up
- 12 It is every Fader's duty to baffle & confuse
- 13 Always remember your free cup of tea
- 14 There's no need to rush - unless you're being chased

## RALIRIDER

I hop on a train  
little fuss  
few passengers  
watch me sit  
a black woman  
a young punk  
old man twiddles his tash  
& in a flash  
the train sets off  
planes wing over london  
& as we reach Croydon  
my brain  
pretends to be elsewhere  
dreaming of mysterious fancies

## BRIGHTON PROMENADE

Less than an hour's ride from London wind the bustling Brighton Lanes,  
On display were T-shirts, vests, oriental eats, florists, flatcaps & funky beats,  
Further still the shlinky streets were laden with bookshops & babes,  
Socks, calendars, creams & rings & everyone flitting around like  
schmetterlings....

...I walked through the exotic Pavilion Gardens deeper into the narrow streets  
Past the vinyl hives & the mopeds, botanical lives & electric threads,  
flea markets, & duvet dappled beds as to my ears swept the sea's dull roar.  
Brighthelmstone - pills, thrills, pubs, clubs, stars, bars, bags, slags, scarves &  
cars...

...Onto the beach I tarried where waves crashed in onto the wet, stony sands  
Only the gulls were at play by a grey-haired old geezer with scarf & beret;  
This is why I travel, for moments like these, melodic music & a warm seabreeze...

...I glide barefoot along the promenade to a skeletal relic  
Where barefoot on the stones, quaffing beer beside the Pier,  
I watched the gull fleet sail the spangled wave.

## 50p BOOKSHOP

In the heart of the Maritime City,  
On Albert Road, still trades the treasure store  
Where first found I those gems of poetry,  
Little jewels of literary lore.

As I disturb the silence of that room  
Bookseller barely glances from the page,  
The musty smell of leather-bound volume  
After volume...

shelf-stack'd, floor-piled...

...the sage

Sweeter deems than perfumes of his lover.

I find, buried, a long-forgotten tome,  
Blow the dust in clouds from its cover,  
To chance upon a book upon the sonnet form!

Ah! they are monumental moments such as these  
Which set an artist's craft adrift on destined seas!

## IN THE ZONE

When you're in the zone  
Every second turns to poesy  
Those tramps sat in the park  
Were they discussing Plato?

What is it about life?  
She seems to twist & turn  
Under shadow & sun  
Without a pause, relentless...

There are those who *live* & those who plain exist  
When realizing our natures  
It is the lone individual which moves the age  
Within the solitude of his page

For, as stones hold the sun's heat long after it is gone,  
My poesis here forever shall remain...

## CAMBRIA

I enter'd Wales along its southern shore,  
Pass'd many breezy towns of prime bereft;  
Like Newport, Port Talbert, Haverfordwest,  
Until I saw Saint David's ancient spires  
& met the Irish ocean with a smile -  
The coast curl'd north, ghostly Aberystwyth,  
Aberdovey's dream, Harlech's stoic keep,  
Dolgellau's mellow stream, fair Machynlleth,  
Portmerions bejewell'd masonry,  
Delayed my days, for this is wondrous Wales,  
A David to the Saxon Goliath,  
But prouder than each English heart I know,  
Where, as I stood upon Glendower's keep,  
    Ahead Cymru's grey passes consume sky!

## OVER GWYNEDD

I tackl'd Snowdon from the low Rhyd Ddu  
Infinite furlongs from her summit view;  
The little cluster that is Liverpool  
& many mountain masses minds enjewel,  
The twinkle of the distant river Dee,  
The rising lion of Aran Fawwdwy,  
The quaint domain of old Dolgellau grey,  
The epic sweep that keeps Cardigan Bay,  
Dinas Emrys & her sleeping dragon,  
Castles at Flint, Harlech & Caernarvon,  
The isle adjacent to th'adjacent isle  
& yonder Wicklow's shadowy defile -  
The British Isles have wrapt me all around,  
Though in the heavens I still touch her ground.

## THIS IS MY EPOCH

I was sat by my tent  
Half-dreaming, playing with my hair  
Staring at the air  
& there, legs crossed  
I found Homer  
Or rather he found me  
Close your eyes, he said, & see...

We surveyed a range of great mountains  
As each was an era  
Each era had a summit  
& there the greatest poems peered out  
On fellow eras & local slopes below  
& I, striding this boiling lava flow  
Thou uncool'd volcano of my times...

## BEAUTIFUL LIVES

Where are you now with your beautiful lives  
& your beautiful wives, & your horses?

Where are you now with your beautiful knives  
As you dine on your beautiful courses?

Leap up & reach for the world open road  
Where the antlers of stags are still living,  
Face up to liberty, free up your load  
For the chill of the night unforgiving.

On waking & feeling the splendour of morn  
We aspire to the days new adventure,  
Our feet are still soggy, your clothes are more torn,  
With a vision of God in each vista.

With beautiful music in curses youve sworn  
As you pace off your beautiful blister!

## **BURNLEY BOUND**

Poised almost home we hiked up Kinder Scout  
In early April when the branches bare  
Or glittering with leaves just starting out  
Upon their quest to fumigate the air  
& so, below all mysterious moors  
Manchester rises from a distant plain  
With all its red brick misery & laws  
Its vehicles, its vapours, & its vain  
Whose city craziness I here dismiss  
For Burnley's beddiness a day awaits  
Where first my spirit felt its mother's kiss  
Entangled in the fibres of the fates  
But first... a moment settled on a stone  
A breath of wind, the heather... & alone!

## UNIVERSAL SOLITUDE

Far from the dubya-dubya-dubya-dot  
That reconciles this planet into one,  
If you wander high up to the hill-slopes  
There lie upon your back, massag'd by spongy moss  
& look upon the sky, & muse upon a cloud  
You could be anyone, anywhere, anytime  
A Corinthian shepherd above the Roman fleets  
A Mexican leper, driven from village streets.

It matters not who'er they were, or where  
For this, the global moment before god,  
When all mark'd equal are, this Shangri-la  
Of little-ness & epic-ness, & light  
When thoughts, by Urania elevated,  
Reveal'd to flutter lofty, free falcons in soft flight.

## DEERPLAY MOOR

Foxglove & thistle empurpling the trail  
That modern man in motion wide discards  
It was time to return to Lancashire  
Across the heights that shadow Calderdale  
& I, their poetical passenger  
Orpheus pressing hard against my sail  
& yes! It seem'd his song had form'd a gale  
Why else allude to mythic Thracian bards!

Across the fields I find the Burnley way  
Lit by those little yellow birds & bees  
That lead me onto Thievelly Pike, among  
Such scenes of rugged beauty greening grey  
For Pennines swept the distance by degrees,  
& fading far as bard's conclude their song.

## FLOWER SCAR ROAD

We live & we die, we are what we are  
There is no more that men may understand  
Whether staying at home, or travelling far  
Spontaneous, or half a lifetime planned

Decisions? what are these but fleeting stones  
Diverting fate's ever resistless flow  
When thoughts reside beside the wool & bones  
On wild roads hewn 2,000 years ago

I stand between two gangs of spinning mills  
Twyx Cliviger & Bacup on the moors  
& feel fresh winded nature thresh the hills  
When all is energizing out of doors

Now with the path steep-broken underfoot  
I close the moment & my notebook shut

## BURNLEY

You must know Burnley to see it's beauty,  
Twixt Hambledon & Pendle where she lies,  
A fertile region of the North contree,  
Of Bingo halls & market stalls & pies,  
Of cobblestones & Bovis Homes & lanes,  
Of working men & the working men's pride,  
Of balmy days & snowy greys & rains  
& blatantly the world's best football side.

You must know Burnley to see it's beauty,  
The arches & the chimneys & Turf Moor,  
The stately halls of Gawthorpe & Towneley,  
The station & the bus-stop & mi door -  
You can keep yer New Yorks, yer Delhis & yer Rome  
At the end of the day there's no place like home!

## ARRAN STREET

As a poignant time-lapse of the soul,  
Removes my child-hood street-by-street  
I brood upon an artificial meadow  
Where recently dilapidated terraces  
Were brick-by-brick demolish'd, levell'd low,

Once, with life, these districts resounded  
But all are dying now, like falling flies,  
Grandmas, Grandads, old Aunties, bald Uncles  
A generation bound in old photographs  
Back then they laughed & cried like me & you

My own street seems to have survived the cull  
But for how long?

If others of its ilk  
Were deemed ungodly, then surely snobbish time  
Will banish mine beneath a grassy mound.

## MI' DAD

Yes, I'm really glad yer mi dad, dad,  
Yer the best that a young lad could have, dad,  
Far better than the king of Baghdad,  
Yer mi dad, dad!

Aye, I'm really glad I'm yer lad, dad  
Cos I get to crash in yer pad, dad  
& chat to yer when I'm all sad, dad  
Yer mi dad, dad!

Yer always so bloody well clad, dad  
& make the best eggs that I've had, dad  
But yer brews, bloody 'ell, they're so bad, dad  
Yer mi dad, dad!

& better still, yer mi mate, mate  
& I love yer, an that's fuckin great!

## HOT-POT PIT-STOP

Up Manchester Road, b' Shanks's Pony,  
Inter Scotts Park, then on up t' Summit  
T'pay mi Grandparents a swift visit  
Fer a bowl o' the best broth in Burnley.

Grampa potters about 'is garden shed,  
Granma slaps th'icin on' slice from market,

Cake crumbs fall on mi old Batman carpet,  
Big piles o' comics & games under' bed.

Wow! Space Marine, Gnasher Badge, Hairy Hand,  
Toy Soldiers, Test Match & mi old Spectrum -

*"What fun," said gramps, "We 'ad back in those days..."*

*"Yer tea's ready!"*

*"Mmmm...them dumplins look grand."*

*"Do you like 'em son?"*

*"Aye Gran, I love 'em."*

& polish seven platefuls in 'er praise.

## GANNOW TOP

Well I learnt to swim at the top o' Rosegrove  
Got a ten metre badge on mi speedos,  
I was seven or so, & two years later  
Went off wi mi class to the baths, n' that

So... Im sat down wi' mi mates on the bus  
When a poo started moving, a real turtle-head  
& instead of rushing straight to the toilet  
I thought I would get changed first, n' that

Then, lo & behold! On mi cubicle floor  
That self-same poo plopp'd down all goo & stinkin'  
So mi teacher made me clean the buggar up  
Then sent me to sit in the stands, n' that

Where I waited mi teasing classmates with dread  
But never, to their credit, was one word said!

## LOSING MY VIRGINITY

Being a bustling athlete as a lad  
I rarely had the chance to chase the girls  
So fittingly my own virginity  
Was lost to this large lass call'd Sarah Moss  
I'd fell for her down Barden's running track  
When she had won the shot-putt meet with ease!  
Soon after training, when we were asweat  
Our young hormones began to intertwine  
& I began to kiss her pretty neck  
Lips bobbing like a robin in the snow -  
She slipp'd a condom on me, & aspar  
Her legs invite me in, a thrust or three,  
& we were lost in rhythm, groans & gasps  
Until I came & there a *man* became!

## EPIPHANIES

Flush with the sensations of youth's constant striving,  
Pushing back the bound'ries of the corners of my mind,  
Cultivating the way of the artistic essences,  
Even kinda dabbled in a little wyrd occult,  
Read the esoteric life of Aleister Crowley -  
Smack-addl'd mystic of Sumerian lore -  
& began to write - all energies within me,  
Focused on the page... creation... literature  
& my pale breath, O frail spark, was changed forever!

An intellectual girlfriend at the time saw my glow,  
Gave me her edition of the complete WB Yeats,  
Starry acolyte of the Order of the Golden Dawn,  
    & eagles rising from fermenting imagination,  
        Led by the light of a true Gaelic bardsman,  
                I found I was a poet after all!

## PENDLE

With the vigours that horde the squirrel stores  
Chill wynters morning drives us out of doors,  
Twixt scatter'd wracks of industry's decay  
Long the Leeds & Liverpool make fair way,  
To tread rough fields, forgotten roads behind,  
As to this heathen sentinel we wind.

Shelt'ring from Northern winds I lounge supine  
On whale-back'd peak, thou solit'ry pennine,  
All in the misty vale an entity,  
Those auld terraced rows of Pendle City,  
A galaxy of lights shatters the gloam,  
One of whom shines the hearth star of my home.

I soak the scene once more afore I go,  
Then turn my back & track to Clitheroe.

**SIR NICKY STOWELL**

*Lord of all Barlick, Lancs, MBE, MBO, BO,  
Bachelor of the Farts, Super Chick-in  
Puck-aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!*

Nick, '*diddliddling*,' my bestest friend,  
Do you remember our eighteenth summer,  
When it felt the good times would never end  
& Barry Island the only bumper.

That Ynnysddu flat, "weed, laughs & wimmin,'  
*"Blowin' a reefer on Salisbury plain,"*  
Newquay, seven chicks, soap, sun, surf, swimmin'  
Our first Glasto - you gotta go again.

Saw Bjork's Debut, Newport's Supersonics,  
Peer Gynt play Stratford, Burnley rule Wembley,  
Massive crowd in Brixton for the Manics  
& that mad, May night in Monmouth, where we  
Sat with the Roses and their album new,

*"Don't think it's as good as the first,"* said you.

## AMSTERDAMINIT

We trawl the long-haul of the motorway  
& pick up more pot-heads past Birmingham  
Jelly wobbles on the waves to Calais,  
Mojo puked in the lowlands near the 'Dam.

We rush'd to relax in the smoky cafes;  
Tried Purple Haze & buy Sensemelia,  
Each coffee & space-cake puff'd up the daze  
Of a mushroom-gilded psychedelia.

We tram'd through 'Dam to the sleezy district,  
Pluck'd up Dutch courage for 'Sucky fucky,'  
Crack head whores begg'd at doors, wink'd to be dicked-  
Its a shame when you pay to get lucky...

Skunked-up, smashed to fuck, zombie bus, bongtubes,  
Grass stashed up Nicky's ass, Richie's itchy pubes.

## CLUBBBINIT

*"Reyt, where next?"*

*"West Bams on at the Orbit..."*

*"...Nah man, too late..."*

*"...The Hac'..."*

*"...Nah, the beers shit..."*

*"...Sankeys..." " ...Nah man, it's closed down..."*

*"...Wigan Pier..."*

*"...Nah, everyone in Wigan is a queer..."*

*"...Lets hit Blackpool, find a shit B & B,  
& pick up fit chicks from some Hen Party..."*

*"...Nah, bin there, worn the crap hat, c'mon team,  
Let's unleash these libidos down at Cream!"*

*Razzin' the freeway, babblin 'bout the Dam,  
With Techno Bangin <Bam-Bam-Bam-Bam-Blam>*

*"Mint mix, Funkster," "Yeah, Angels ninety-six!"  
"...Ee-yar Damo" " ...Ta Mojo, Oos next" ...Nicks!"*

*We park at the Arndale,  
"Owdo lasses!"*

*Floozies ooze by,  
'Hey cuties, nice asses!'*

## SALLY CINNAMON

you are  
poetic clever  
sensual-amusing  
sweet-sassy-sharing  
warmhearted-caring  
adorable-decadent  
funny-joyloving  
inspirational  
kittencute  
o baby  
I love  
you  
so  
!

## LOVE'S DAWN

My love, as our love is spreading wider than the morning

Together, with waking day, in the wake of night

Let us settle in silent ecstasy

Observers of cities below

Watching

From this high advantage

Developing

On heath, up hill,

Enveloping moments

As one

For like a flight of swallows lift

On ocean winds, above the isles

We touch

Soft spirits sail higher

Eyes comitting

Pleasure beckons

Mercurial kisses

We smile

As kitten paws a mellow mouse

A lion roars inside these feral souls

& we are born again, the music of the morn

Accompanies these energies love's mysteries supply

## THITHER THE ABOVE

O knightly lights of heaven, star on star  
You never shone so beauteous, we are  
The work, perhaps, of some astral being  
Or am I him now I am the all-seeing  
Acolyte of the lost art of the skies  
Painting Orion & the Geminis  
Musing upon those long, eternal days  
Soar shooting stars, trailblazing my amaze  
Mixt with the phantom-llumin'd Milky Way  
I saw, I swear, the Seraphim at play  
Dancing between the planetary kings  
Lord Jupiter & Saturn's eerie rings  
Venus is beaming streaming dreams of love  
Sweetheart come hither, thither the above

## EIRE

From Holyhead the British Isles recede  
Before another spreads horizon wide  
& soon we have entered the Dublin pale  
Divided by the sluggish Liffy flow  
Refreshment lifts us from the Temple Bar  
Through Bray into the gloomy Wicklow Hills  
To spend a week at gorgeous Glendaloch  
Then gallop west through Galway's savage peaks  
To brave the fierce, grievous Atlantic spray  
& scale the heights some human mountain goat,  
To pace the ancient battle cairns of Cong  
Then back to Dublin, cross the bloody Boyne  
& up to Belfast's passionate divides  
Where Scotland twinkles cross a Celtic Sea

## THE LOW ROAD

Sally has led me onto Scottish roads  
As soak'd in history as soak'd in rain  
The long road from Stranraer leads to Dumfries  
Where Rabbe Burns has proved the psyche's saint  
& proud Caelaverok puts keeps to shame  
Where noble Nithsdale ponders from the North  
& Dalveen Pass is proof of God's own art

Thro Lanarkshire the roads to Glasgow pour  
Third of Great Britain's megalopoli  
Where life is tough but never never-lived  
I cross the Clyde on foot & tour that sprawl  
But cities seldom sooth a poet's soul  
For knowing highland phalanx guards the north,  
Images of mountains rise massive in my mind.

## PAISLEY

I'm cringing every time I see a proper Paisley tie  
I'd just popp'd hungry into Greggs a hottish pie to buy  
& chose a steak & kidney offer'd up for ninety pee  
I took the pie, she took the change & said, "*It's ninety three.*"  
I said, "*Love, that's false advertising,*" walking out the door,  
But never mess with Weegie Birds, they're all fuckin' hard-core  
& leaping from her hum-drum she pursued me down the street  
Looking as if an earthquake were shaking a slab of meat  
& panting now beside me squeez'd the pastie from my hands  
Smugging with satisfaction at her petty jobsworth's stand  
& turns her tail in triumph, as back to her shop she skips  
You coulda balanced ninety three bridies on her fat hips  
Then looking down on what was left, my skin all bruise'd with mince  
I thought I'd catch the first train out – ain't ever been back since!

## SKYE BY NIGHT

I found myself on the edge of civilization  
Not Tierra del Fuego or frozen Archangel  
But Portree, place to be, 'metropolis' of Skye  
Two thousand Highlanders sheep dip high  
Europe's second highest suicides among young men  
The port seems too quiet as I am drawn  
To the sound of celeigh at the Gathering Hall  
*"Can we have a drink?"*

*"I'm afraid ye cannae!"*

*"Is this a local party for local people?"*

Sally hands me the flyer

18th annual Isle of Skye  
Alcoholics Anonymous gathering  
Tonight's theme... *Tolerance*

## SKYE

As Kestrels surf the mountain-fringed spaces  
Road twists between saturnine gargants,  
Romantic mounds of monstrous magma,  
Marvelous munroes of aulden minstrel-song,  
Lost in the moment, eyes keen to the skies,  
Hard traveling unravels, sailing above us  
Silver-fire mists of the sylvan alpine rise,  
& beyond, entering the stunning scope  
Of another planet, another Jupiter,  
Sodden expanse of treeless waste,  
But beautiful land, stupendous Cuillin hills,  
Seats of Titans, where thrusting solar shafts  
Induce startling notions of timelessness -  
Here there is no time, only milky flowing waterfalls.

## LOCH FYNE

As I went walking round wild Ardkinglas  
With sea-loch mist a wood-thrush swoop oerhead  
My senses stirr'd as speechless I did pass,  
The noble Fir, tall Beech & Rowan red.

I felt an Oak, as centuries have spread  
The foliage of monarchies of trees  
& canopy the soil on which are shed  
Their leafy legacy! A deft sea-breeze

Has shook a flower-stalk as tho' to please  
My love of natural things, a soul reborn,  
Like pond & lily pad at perfect ease,  
I found repose, harbour'd neath a Hawthorn,

To changing season's sensibility  
I felt a pagan in my poetry!

## TWO WOLVES

Let us scamper under Munroes  
As the rivers thro them move  
& there all this love for you girl  
'Midst the mountains I shall prove

Lets us skip along the loch banks  
Where the coupling salmons leap  
& there in the heat of summer  
Lie two lovers sound asleep

Let us waken when the moon drifts  
As she shingles thro the glen  
Energizing haelan' songsmiths  
With a fireside tale or ten

Then, love, let's scamper onwards,  
Under Munroes, once again.

## BALNAKIEL

Eurasia, Eurasia, from tip to toe  
Men may wander thee forever in vain  
From the sensuous sierras of Spain  
To the towers of spangling Tokyo  
They have stumbl'd thro' Siberian snow  
Unto jungles where the Ganga parts plain  
Enough to send a troubadour insane  
For Shangri-La a myth most never know.

Yet, here lie the shores of Arabia  
& the fjords of the Skull-helms of old  
Here, an angel-throne'd high Himalaya  
& a castle of Prince Leopold,  
For here be defining Eurasia,  
Reminding us with weathers manifold.

## THE HIGH ROAD

The sun has set as steer & stereo  
Accompany the roads to Samarkand  
& I sing back, renewed lothario  
Opens a page & pulls a pen to hand  
Enough light is there in this lovely glow  
Lighting the mountains of a clansman's land  
Some stoic slept, some capp'd with blocks of snow  
Being a region ancyent eagles spann'd,  
The muse now omnipresent as we go  
Past Inverness & Perth as paths were plann'd  
Soon moon-diffusing clouds pale lights bestow  
On epic structures looming gloom & grand  
& through the rough sea coss-winds all ablow  
We cross the Forth for Queensferry's fair strand.

## CALTON HILL

I am the Silver Rose,  
& with these streets shall fuse,  
To etch my gift in rhyme;  
For as our starbreeze blows,  
It too provokes the muse  
To join us, for a time!

She, for a time, shall serve  
All manners of mankind,  
Far delving through his realm;  
For this is Scotia's verve,  
By Eldritch dream design'd  
Some hell-witch at the helm,

In dragon's furnace born,  
By faerie fingers worn!

## THE DALRIADA

Astride the city limits, penn'd by wave  
& Lothian's God-Country rolling East  
A palace stands which Linus would play proud

*"Come in! Come in, you're all very welcome  
To the three o'clock session, bring a drum  
Guitar, pipes or violins, sing a song*

You would think they'd been doing this for years  
Or at least since the Home Guard had moved in  
Singing shanties as they saved the railings:

But no! Mere years ago a man & wife  
With music in their blood bought up the place  
& brought together local troubadours  
With an increasingly ambient audience...

...In all my days I've never felt so free.

## PORTOBELLO PARK

There was this Weegie at a car boot sale  
Floggin' his stuff at rock-bottom prices  
& bartering thirty clubs for three quid  
I starts marching thro toun, putter & wedge  
Zigzaggin' Bruntsfield links nigh every day  
Where shot-by-shot I found the Tiger Zone,  
After all, Embro's still golf's sacred hame,  
On Musselburgh's nine holes I upp'd my game  
When, one day, Portobello, on my own,  
& I don't think I even paid to play,  
But even so, stood on the tee-side edge  
I yelp'd with glee! A real-life hole-in-one!  
But no-one at the course or the houses  
Witness'd my claim to golfing's holy grail!

## SCOTTISH POETRY LIBRARY

As pleasure makes us read & reading makes us know  
& knowing makes us sing, & singing makes us grow  
    'Tis best to set in store the reliquary of song  
A merry house of books which all can march among  
    To cherish & sustain a native heritage  
As Homer heard the tales of Menalean rage

Down here on Crichton's Close a nation's soul is kept  
The surge MacDiarmid surf'd, the dirges Dunbar wept  
    Thro Scotland's love of art & Gulbenkian gift  
    An avalanche of books available for sift  
    Come pile a table high, as shelf-by-shelf we comb  
    To find that special verse or take those verses home

    If ever passing by, when under poesy's spell,  
Come pause & swoon & sigh where kindred spirits dwell!

## RABBIE BURNS

There is a certain knack to becoming an immortal  
As Orpheus's heartbeat passes thro Pluto's portal  
& Burns arriv'd at Baxter's Close by Lady Stair's fine house  
Singing of reeking haggises & a wee tim'rous mouse  
& even as, on that first day, he copp'd a '*gardy-loo*'  
Went shit-caked, wand'ring city-streets, without a bloody clue  
He knew if he could sing his songs the world was sure to hear  
& so, oor sweet Sordello, soon found Johnnie Dowie's beer  
With enough space for a fiddle, & as the Argo's cox  
He beats enchanting rhythm thro his native tides & rocks  
& soon, at Mrs Carfrae's door, his destiny would stand  
*"Your little book of poetry the gossip of the land!"*

& soon, to Edinburgh, in thanks, oor bardie's pen address'd  
Verse added to this new addition, both Edina-bless'd

## ANN STREET

O wealth Karlsefinian, O pride Carthaginian  
That vision of Raeburn, his mission to make home  
Midst fellow high-fliers with rich-filling coffers  
Dona Jimena Diaz, the lodger De Quincey  
A quality street by Queen Mother acclaim'd;  
Exclusive, expensive, elusive advantages  
Two gardens to tend to, a postcode of gold  
But built before parking & permits & penpushers  
The mad, modern nightmare the New Town now knows!

As bright lunar lamps light the gates day & nightly  
Contented, this classical address widely crav'd  
With wings like a mansion well over a million  
Or more for the glory of lordlier life  
All named after Raeburn's amazing young wife

## MENAGERIE

When Noah's Ark left two-by-two  
They'd hurry back in if they'd knew  
They'd one day end up in a zoo,  
For all the fucking world to view;  
The Wolverine, the Kangaroo  
The Lesser, spiral-horn'd Kudu  
The Chimpanzees in pirate crew  
The Turacoo of violet hue  
The coarse-quill'd, stiff-claw'd, casque'd Emu  
Flies flocking to the Rhino poo  
The Pygmy Hippo, & what's new  
The Ocellated Turkey too!

I climb the walls, midst human herds  
An Alcatraz of Beasts & Birds!

## MESOLITHIC CRAMMOND

Twelve thousand years ago Crammond was swept by a higher sea  
Where on the beach our ancestors eked out a winning existence  
Living embodiments of the migration of intelligence  
*"The proof is in the pits of nut-shells!"* mutters archaeology  
Paleolithic, Neolithic, whatever they may be  
Flint tools were used, stone arrowheads flew, so they must have had *some* sense  
More for practical eventualities, not to please futurity

Mankind is older than the dust of lost forgotten cities  
& the monkeys & the dogs & the lizards we all once were  
There is a wondrous common-ness to which all creation must answer  
A pond of ancient memories, you can hear them in the ditties  
Sung by blind bards, & in the Spring when deep down we remember  
Being those plants gasping for life across thirsty, frozen tundra  
    Like a baby turning towards the milky breast of his mother!

## SNOW WHITE ROBE

I went up to John Lewis's with half-a-ton to spend  
Upon my ain respectable, delectable girlfriend  
& found a lovely dressing gown so comfortable & snug  
So I could bathe in duvet bliss whenever we should hug  
& choosing one all snowfall white I bounded stair on stair  
Up to the fifth floor, feeling festive, rudolf thro the air  
To wrap her pretty present with the verve her love deserves  
But life, of course, the bloody thing, oft flings a ball that curves

I noticed, to my horror, muddy bits the robe endarks  
(I should have bought the dark blue one I'd spotted doon at Marks)  
& being too polite to change the robe I thought I'd nudge  
The dirt onto strong sellatape ( & left a little smudge)  
To leave her opening impressions untainted, almost,  
One wash away from spotlessness, robes whiter than a ghost

## RAN-DAN-DAN

Auld Reekie's wicked when ya reekin'  
The Bongo Club's a buzz when ya peakin'  
But if it's traditional fare ya seekin'  
Try the Royal Oak or Sandy Bells  
But if folk music aint ya thing  
The Caves are full of sing-a-ling  
Pivo's jumpin' & just as free  
& the Jazz Bar, defin-ate-ly  
Til chuckin-oot at three!  
When we go to York Place Casino  
Keeping well fed & water'd til six -  
When the world's wakin' on weetabix -  
    Hit Priscillas for gay karaoke  
    With a Raver, the Radge & a Folkie

## PORT O' LEITH

Swamp'd in a sea of impedimenta

Scuzzily creative

All classes of late-night characters converge

For what can only be call'd an UBER-RAVE

All watch'd over by the diligent eye

Of the indisputable Queen o' Leith

What magic myst'ries in her mistress eyes

Puzzlingly elated

Still sumptuous in style, Leith's Lady Ga-Ga,

Like a mixture of the new Leith & the Old

Better than Betty Moss & Bet Lynch put together

& a *lady* to be serv'd by

Pamplona to Napoli, Galway & Colne

It's definitely the maddest pub I've supp'd in

## HEATHER LODGE

My cities, I leave thee, gritty & grime,  
This budding muse prepares the spirit's ark,  
Where bird-migration marks the pass of time

What was lifestyle now grey & stranger-stark  
Like Guernica or Oranges-sur-Seine,  
Once vivid colours growing daily dark.

This strange occasion wends my thoughts to when  
Wordsworth had found a stool to ease his mind  
From crowded sensibilities of men

I, too, hope happy harbourage to find  
Beside a world of green, where piny glade  
By Vallambrosan cardinal design'd

For as Iona's church from wattles made  
The forum for a forest made fair trade.

## AT HOME

This land so very different from the map  
Whose shades of green & grey fail to divulge  
The beauty of this place I now call home  
I now call home, these words unreal to hear  
How many times I sing them to my mind  
If this is so, I must now be prepared  
For all eventualities life keeps  
But balanced in my years let fear subside  
My body following its shining soul  
For she has led me safely here thus far  
Where now I feel a Caledonian  
Sent here by love, by love deposited,  
& sense I have a while yet to remain  
For on this place & time three things converge  
An art, its artist & his ain hearts surge

## THE SNOWY ROSE

I took a walk on snowcapped Lammermuir  
With deathly wilderness hushed all around  
& to a point of poetry austere  
From cleansing soul I heard the sagas sound

These are the moments one must keep in trust  
In memories of those fine melodies  
Of beautiful bombastic blow & blust  
That echo down the endless centuries

For we must think eternal, we who choose  
To store zeitgeist, raise past & prophesize  
All for that rose-raked token of the muse  
That on the page, post-procreated, lies

So, ceasuring twyx Cheviot & Fife  
I reaffirm the living of my life

## OVER LOTHIAN

We forage up volcanic Traprain Law  
Reliquary Votadinian our mates  
From gorse-gold mount the jewell'd Lothian shore  
Curves round the Firth of Forth's most famous gates,

Beneath rocks of volcanic pimplierie  
Dunbar, East Linton, Haddington abide,  
Fields reach the Forth & beaches there beside  
Or lonely Lammermuir where thought soars free.

& further still, beside the Fifer sea,  
The silver streak of Portobello sands,  
Leads us to Leith, then inland, shadowy,  
Peeps Arthur's Seat, by these sleeping Pentlands;

This is the length of Roman Lothian,  
A county home my roaming soul hath won

## **BENEDICTUS**

Go thee to Garvald, go up to Nunraw  
Summit of Cistercian activity  
Gain'd from the Hayes of Hailes & Traprain Law  
& many a Ravenswood dynasty.  
Dally, then pass thro the Fortatrice door  
Friends enter a centre of sanctity  
So go thee to Garvald, seek out Nunraw  
Summit of Cistercian activity

As chapel-roof'd cherubim spread their wings  
Thro the heraldrics of Christian kings  
Far from the golden glow of Gallilee  
Fathers offer coffee & compassion  
To those souls tired of vices & fashion  
Cistercian essence of god's destiny.

## PRESSMENNAN WOODS

Feel the feeling on the edge of summer  
Hours before your first foggybummer  
April, perhaps, or March on a good year  
Out on the tracks with the shy pregnant deer  
Wearing that hat that you've worn all Winter  
Skimming thro Plaid or the plays of Pinter  
Warming each pace in your courdoroy clothes  
As petals do abud before the rose.

& all at once we lesson from our haste  
& cardigans are tied about the waste  
& soon we feel upon the naked arm  
A zephyr-waft, so soft, so cool, so calm  
& I shall follow them wher e'er they will  
    Free spirits, til the first Autumnal chill

## AETHALSTANEFORD

### Dramatis Personae

Angus MacFergus – High King of Alba

Kennith MacAlpin – Prince of Alba

Eochaidh – King of Dalriada

**Scene** – *The Peffer Valley, 832 AD – King Angus heads a combined army of Picts & Scots, blocking the path of the Aethalstan's Angles*

*Eochaidh* - What think ye, Angus, lord of our command

Your face is furrow'd as a farmer's field

Are ye concern'd with if we should withstand

This fearsome host

*Angus* – Some strange dream is my shield

For last night good Saint Andrew came to me

Promising survival & victory

*MacAlpin* – King look, the way those white clouds cross the blue

Same as the day a saint was crucified

Strung up on Roman wood, your dream comes true

Is this his ghost?

*Angus* – Come Scotland, unified,

Let us bless Andrew's sainthood & Saltire

Whose eminence shall ever Scots inspire

## SUMMER VISTA

Upon the steep slopes of Spott Dod  
I sat, observing as a god  
Surveys creation all below,  
Through fields reflecting summer's glow  
The London train creeps past a car,  
The wavy mane beside Dunbar  
Grew angel blue, no northern sea  
In glassy, grey conformity,  
But more an Adriatic Bay  
Ecstatic with a cloudless day  
& I, above it, with the sheep  
Some rustic Croat half asleep  
Dreaming where men have rarely trod  
Upon the steep slopes of Spott Dod

## WHAT BLEEDS FOR FIVE DAYS & DOES NOT DIE?

She moans about her hormones every second week in four  
Goes clattering the cutlery & slamming every door  
Like when we reached East Lothian & found a paradise  
But she was full of PMT & said, "*It's not THAT nice,*"  
Yet women are man's reason, so when swings the pendulum  
Put on your safety helmet for the fireworks to come -  
She sulks & yells, her belly swells, her paranoia grows,  
Now fear the snarling werewolf where you once could smell a rose,  
Cos' women synch up to the moon, that's just the way things are,  
So never say "*irrational,*" or let her drive the car,  
& if you feel frustrated in a very vocal war  
Letting your lady win will just infuriate her more  
But when the fun is over, son, there's one thing you should do -  
Embrace your woman, kiss her lips & whisper, "*I love you!*"

## RELATIONSHIPS

you cant just expect respect  
you have to go out & earn it  
& if you accept all is wreck't  
you'd best find a bridge & then burn it  
unless in the fridge lives some chardonnay  
or a bottle of malt in the kitchen  
then sit yourself down & camly say  
for a wee little drink i be itchin'  
booze makes temper's tides ebb & flow  
& tipsiness conducive to love  
so say, with a doubtless rosy glow  
you're the being im thinking of  
& sailing your ship out of danger  
you'll make a new friend of a stranger

## LOVE'S REPOSE

Ah Sally! Sweet Sally Cinnamon, hear,

Even now, after all that we've gone through,  
From halcyon highs to those awful lows  
The fact we chose to share together,  
Repose in Scotia's fertile land; where fruit  
Grows wild; remember gooseberries were found -  
Where Falcons vie with Crows to claim the sky,  
Where vista-on-vista splendidly glows  
Before eyes remember them when they close,  
Where Whittinghame Water flows carefree,  
Free as these souls of ours; suppose they met  
But they were sleeping – when windy fate blows  
Life grows, so rose us from dim city streets  
Like poesy from prose, come cherish this truth.

## YESTERDAYS

*"Do you remember the good old days?"* asks Sally

*"The good old days were SHITE!" I reply,*

*"Just four television channels  
    The pubs shut at eleven  
    TV over by midnight  
ZX spectrum games taking ages to load  
    & all that poverty & austerity  
    'We were happy,' people said  
    But we weren't really,  
Just ignorant & oblivious to progress!"*

*"I meant me & you," says Sally  
& I think I see a tear in her eye*

*"I do," I say, "I do very much!"  
& hugg'd her as a lover & a friend*

## **MOODY BLUES**

The spirit of romance is with us

A man a woman & a dog  
Listening to sea-girt violin concertos

The weather turns all unsettled  
Full of gallivanting gulls, Tintallon's waves  
& this single black eagle...

Senses shatter'd by a drunken Doonhamer  
I mean... Sally plus PMT plus alcohol  
Equals hell-sent banshee hell-bent on fury

Relationship psychobabble pierces our nirvana  
*"Its a long way to drive to have a row!"* I say  
But she keeps on scowling...

I slink to the tent, leave her staring out to sea  
A fisher-widow searching for her long-drowned love

## LOVE'S LAMENTATIONS

There thrives for love a lively interest,

The love that flutters in those faerie dells  
We all have felt, yet know not where she dwells  
Behind the harden'd boneyards of the breast  
Where seldom stays she longer than the guest  
Who comes to visit when fresh asphodels  
Have daily spoil'd beneath their fragrant shells  
'Til flung upon the muck-heap with the rest.

Our hearty begins the journey beating whole  
But fractures at joy's maddening demise,  
Some monkey, still alive, but lab-sliced ope;  
A memory of Rome hands off the wall  
That was our happy place, & in your eyes,  
When I see them moved on, from tears bleeds hope.

### LEAVING LOTHIAN

I came, I saw, I caleigh'd with the Scots  
Veni.. vedi... a private victory  
My lady swooning to wild lily-knots  
Oor homestead settl'd in serenity  
Soaking in Scottish sensibility

Itching beyond mere whistle binkie bards  
I strove for all that's good in sonnetry  
Woodwound, musey on the New Town boulevards,  
Where seertitle shines through the teller's cards  
& Lothiads dolphin'd upon the stage,  
Sturdy as Napoleonic grognards  
Peerless as pioneers upon the page.

Now with its host of sonnets safe in store  
From Rydal Mounts must makers take their tour...

## DEPARTURES

As planets in their stolen orbits sway  
Enraptured by the sun's eternal day  
So too must move the motions of the heart  
& lovers from each other cleave apart  
& so I go, some Rama far from Seeta  
Or then again, maybe I'm yet to meet her...

As Autumn's vegetation makes decay

Down Goldenacre-Warriston's pathway  
I see the sun rise up on Arthur's Seat  
& silhouette the city's spinal street  
This is, I think, a hint of things to come  
Like Sufi's singing Sindhi to a drum

Thus poet-prospects loaded up with ore  
These feet shift east to meet Savitri's shore

### **LEAVIN REEKIE'**

As every human smile some thought originates  
Each gate & bridge & stile some purpose demonstrates  
North Bridge the proper heart of Embro's pentagon  
That once was worlds apart, but now is merg'd as one  
With views of seas & peak, of plain & keep & spire  
A city quite unique 'neath Heaven's wide empire  
One last look at the view, then leave for vistas new

Non moveromai corda ove la turba

Di sue ciance assorda – time to go,  
Still cooking these chicken nugget sonnets  
From Embro I depart, emprison'd by weary heart  
As if I'd lost a friend, but with trance-waking shout  
The train starts trundling slow, past Haymarket, & now  
Chants Latin down the track, Auld Reekie – *I'll be back!*

## ODE TO SCOTLAND

Well I've been here ten years, but its time to do one  
I've sank a load of beers & I thank ye for the fun  
Spinnin' thro hootenannies with a bonnie halean howl  
Purrin' with pretty pussies on an m-cat prowl  
I've driven round Loch Lomond, walk'd five hundred miles yon Tain  
Gone roamin' in the gloamin' wrapped in midge-proof cellophane

I've organis'd four Jock Stocks with a need to make ye dance  
& scampered up yer Cuillin rocks as mountain mists advance

I've mused thro an Ediniad of sonnets Reekie round

The best nights that I've ever have with best friends that I've found

But something in a poet's soul must sail his craft abroad

& leave behind the rock n roll, when lightening the load

They'll furrow forth down foreign streams, forgetting never they

Those places full of god-sent dreams, like Garvald 'neath the hay.

## **FRESH ENDEAVOURS**

Rested!

Unrestrain'd!

Re-gestated!

Ready to walk the world a thousand days

E'erwhile the day gleams glorious & gold

Poesis in my heels, unfetter'd mares

Quenching their thirst from twinkling Rubicon.

There pois'd I am,  
Not knowing where these steeds will lead  
Mountain, Sands or Sea  
Enamelling my spirit on the way

Whereforeso art thou goest, gracious muse  
Remember, I am always at thy call  
Sweet ruler of all I can do or dare...

## TAKE-OFF

There is a built-up weight of images & memories  
Within ceaseless receptacles, buds of floral soul  
& as we rise oer Scotland, as free as air men breath,  
Bursting earth's first clouds, come seize such scenes  
of seas & trees & mountains & a sky cerulean!  
Reminding us of Italy, tis not long now,  
Before thy vintage vignettes, *once more!*

Moments as these, allied to epic thought  
Propel mental liasons, '*Sir, dally with one-up-man-ship!*  
*No Homer ye may be & yet we rove those overskies*

*Once-peopled by his poesy, with all the winds of Jupiter  
Go laptop peppering, no need for rhyme's remembrance  
Though that will roll inevitable when Italy unclogs thy heart  
& pours love down's life's arteries for the ghosts of a noble cause! "*

## IN AEREO

Tis a fabulous day to be flying  
Over England & her summer-bronz'd fields  
Her towns & cities shaped like knitted shields  
& Thames - lucid blue reapplying

Now Antwerp passes 'neath us in a ring  
& Amsterdam a pleasure to behold  
Now banks of cloud glide under glinting gold  
As oer Europa's plain unseen we wing

Now from the mass the rank & file emerge  
In polka dot procession to the Alps  
That tumble upwards & their snowy scalps  
Upstrain to touch us, behemothic surge

Forming the one land wall of Italy

Where souls of lofty softness oft set free!

## ADRIATICA

Serene afternoon... the streets of Rab are quiet, the stones  
I step on as smooth as silk – the sky cloudless, deep azure,  
Collar turned up I begin an ascent, the terrain  
A plethora of white, jagged, quartz-like stone.

Half-way up the yellow, flower-trumpet dotted peak  
I gaze back on an island, evergreen forest-realm  
Silky-still lagoons, snow-capp'd mainland mountains  
& Rab's marble township jutting out like luxury liner.

My ears strain for noise, relieved by buzzing fly,  
& bleating phalanx of sheep, led by rustic Croat  
Whose rocks usher stray ewes & lamb back to the flock.

As the sheep disappear I resume my scrambling climb  
Up this lizard-strewn gully to the stony summit, & feel  
Some mighty wind thundering across a thousand islands.

## LETTER FROM LORETO

Dear Sally, if ye came to Italy,  
Some honey'd walk upon a Tuscan eve  
We would, beneath those happy stars, conceive  
Ours is a love to share eternally

Then to this papal shrine that love I'll lead  
T'where god's own salvific omnipotence  
Shines thro' this Black Madonna's soft presence  
Where pleas of budding mothers angels heed.

How quiet are these walls of Nazareth  
Beneath Maccari's frescoed dome sublime  
& there let us entwine our hearts, our breath  
& ask for little life to bliss our time.

Where pinning sacred ribbon to thy breast  
Lets hope our triduum by Dio blest!

## CAMPALDINO

Across the sheer Consuma Pass the Papal Guelfs did steer  
To permeate the Poppi plain, the Ghibellines appear  
Noble Swabian lineage with rival war ensigns  
Amplified by Catenaian Alps & spangling Apennines  
The sun had risen muggy on Saint Barnabas's day,  
Where over Verna, Francis of Assisi's hands did pray,  
Dante Alighieri, far beyond his metaphors,  
Stood in the first line of the Guelfs, the fearless Feditors,  
& faced the charging enemy, & yes he was afraid  
Protected by Apollo many mortal parries made  
As now the Pavesari wrap around the fading foe  
Who drop their shields & fled the field, splashing thro the Arno,  
The Guelfs did claim a victory & furthermore the pride  
*"Come Dante,"* said Boccacio, *"Let us to Florence ride!"*

## CASALINO

More tranquil than the murmur of a rose,  
The piazzas of Pratovecchia,  
Bethlehem-twinning, harbour a sweet repose,  
Calm cluster shepherds call Casalino -  
Here Dante mused upon his fifth canto,  
For Paulo & Francesca tears did pour,  
Mixing with the streamlings of the Arno,  
Flowing to ev'ry Italian shore -  
A place to set poesia in store,  
Where sacred sisters break the ancient bread,  
There, summoned by the grunting of wild boar  
Into a place where feet have seldom tread,  
Not life nor history shall help mine art,  
Just fragrant music of the valley-heart.

*Pui tranquilo del mormorio della rosa, la piazza di Pratovecchia, Betlemme-gemellare, rifugio una villaggio dolce, amosso calmo il pastori chiamato Casalino - Ecco Dante meditato il suo cante cinque, Lacrime versate per Paulo & Francesco, Mescolato con il fiumicello giovane del' Arno, Scorando a tutta la riva d'Italia – Un posto per consevara la poesia, Dove les suore sacreto spezzanno il pane antico, La, convoco presso il gruniri dei chingialo selvaggi, Dentro un bosco dove un piede ha calpestato raramente, Non vita*

*ne storia auiteranno la mia arte, Solo musica fragrante del cuore delal valle.*

## FARFALLA

		*		*
		*		*
		*		*
		*	*	
<b>skoelapper</b>				<b>nipwisipwis</b>
liblikas	farasha	<b>titli</b>	mariposa	dimago
burabiro	sommerflue	<b>mot'l</b>	petalou'da	paruparo
pi sugnya	<i>butterfly</i>	uvevane	<b>kupu</b>	lupelupe <i>vlinder</i> pulelehua
papillon	<i>lilldeh</i>	<b>popti</b>	peplim	papalotl
txipilota	<i>choochoo</i>	<b>lepke</b>	<i>perhonen</i>	luvivane
prajapathi	<i>papilio</i>	<b>flutur</b>	<i>bimbilo</i>	kupukupu
peperuda	<i>huitzil</i>	<b>fuf lao</b>	<i>bembe</i>	gorgoleta
borboleta	<i>kakupo</i>	<b>tauriuö</b>	<i>kelebek</i>	babochka
woo deep	<i>zanimu fithrildi</i>	<b>parpar</b>	<i>fluturi kipepeo</i>	bayboum
serurubele	<i>bulubulu</i>	<b>metulj</b>	<i>ramarama</i>	mpornboli
hevavahkema	fefe-fefe	<b>pepeo</b>	pili-pala	schmetterling
pillango	marlimarlirni	<b>oguyo</b>	shavishavi	parvaneh
<b>sommerfugl</b>		<b>fjril</b>		<b>samanalaya</b>

## A REPLY TO DANTE

I reckon it was not love that you saw  
But manifested images of soul  
For when a muse first to her care dost call  
The bard, then rise dreams, vivacious & raw.

From vixen Beatrice such pictures draw,  
That blazing heart, thine art set to install,  
That weeping man, emotion's pensive squall -  
Then rave about these as is natural law.

Back when you ask'd us you were but a boy  
Basking in your quattordici versi,  
Probing excitedly for life's answers.

In such love unrequited you found joy  
Indulging in a world of phantasy  
Not the sweet realness of romances.

*In the first sonnet in his Vita Nuova, Dante Alighieri asks his fellow poets to explain the dream he had in which he saw his beloved Beatrice. His request was granted in the sonnet-form by many of his contemporaries, including Cavalcanti.*

## ON THE VERGE OF THIRTY

I'm strollin' tall on the verge o' thirty,  
Still feelin' fine, still foxy, still flirty,  
Losin' weight on mi tour of Italy,  
Stick that up yer middle-age spread!

I was gonna write a look-at-me sonnet  
About the things I've done since I was twenty-five  
But sack that! Shelley had died by now  
Mi best mate's got married at the same age  
& Dante had barely finished his Vita Nuova!

So a new life it is & the past is past...

'Cos I'm still thinkin' o' sonnets  
& I'm still drinkin' mi wine  
Give me life & get me on it,  
Now that I am twenty-nine!

## ABOVE PORTOVENERE

O sacred summit has it been so long  
Since last we prosper'd high on clifftop tall  
The sea's papparazi pleasing our song  
Lush lullaby,  
How years on swift wings fall  
Now only slender pocket-books of rhyme  
Truth-honouring the passaging of time

I look back on this lovely life we chose  
When poetic renaissance did renew  
Those esoterics of a *Silver Rose*  
O blushing sigh!  
Toward this place we drew  
Thro all my twenties, as I linger here  
The zephyrs of youth's musings re-appear.

## VAGABONDO

Solo, sono stato viaggio,  
Dalle complessite senza vita,  
Di villaggio a villaggio,  
Panarami di vista a vista -  
Oh! sospiri del Viarregio,  
Oh! scheletro catta di Calcata,  
Solo, sono stato viaggio,  
Dalle complessite senza vita.

Stelle quando sono campaggio,  
Pensiero sulla passaggio,  
Oh! isola balerno di Ponza,  
Oh! piazza confortolvemente,  
Oh! bellaza di Portovenere,  
Oh! Non complicato mezza-vita!

*Alone, I went wandering, from complexities without life, from village to village, panorama from view to view - O! sighs of Viareggio, O! skeletal cats of Calcata, Alone, I went wandering, from complexities without life. Stars when I am camping, thoughts upon the path, O! whale-island of Ponza, O! comfortable city-squares, O! beauty of Portovenere, O! uncomplicated half-life!*

## OSTIA

Different Ages, Different Eras, Different Lives,  
Different People now, in us still survives  
Those secret, tender memories of you  
& I in love, I know you'll feel them too

For happiness comes to a lucky few  
& you & I too shared such of joy  
When nothing felt a strain, when all reign'd true,  
Some Paris sweeping Helen off to Troy.

But as that city felt Achaen wrath  
Our love fell as a crumbling citadel  
& on its ashes stands our cenotaph

But as Aeneas found Ostian sound  
To beach his ship amidst the sand & shell  
So too our broken hearts find solace-ground

9 AD

Thro the Teutoburger Wald went the arms of Varius  
Arminius of the Cherusci made his excuses  
& soon a ghoulisn baritas surrounds the sons of Mars  
Chaunting for Lord Tuisto & Odin amidst the stars  
The chiefs fighting for victory, companions for their chief  
They set out all for slaughter, no quarter & no relief  
A black storm rages all around the javelins & spears  
The fallen Goths are carried off to greet their widow's tears

Three days of rampant carnage in the dark & marshy wood  
Some roman gen'ral cuts his throat & gurgles on the blood  
Men cast aside their armour & await the lethal blow  
Only a lucky few would safely reach the Rhine's wide flow  
The news reaches Augustus, flying thro grieving regions;  
*"O Quintillius Varius, give me back my legions!"*

**THE NAZARENE**

*Gethsemene*

*Judas rope*  
*Archmagus*  
*Sadly maintain the scandalised Sanhedrim*  
*Leaning their wills upon the Roman whim*  
*The Pilate's order: murder the son of Him*  
*To Calvary*  
*A Crucifix*  
*Sanguinus*  
*Human sin*  
*Son of god*  
*Devils day*  
*Pious fires*  
*Epiphanies*

## **BELOW SCOPELLO**

To become, to belong, bohemian,

So many miles my smitten songsmith sent,  
Striving for prospects paradesean  
& an immortal moment's monument -

Time carves us this vista Tyhrennean,  
Tranquilo corner of a continent,  
To become, to belong, bohemian,  
So many miles my smitten songsmith sent.

This rocky cove, this tower, this mountain,  
Blend in an often prophesied fusion,  
Sweet Sicily!

Sat silent & content,  
Recently have my dreams increasing seen  
Visions of places I had never been  
Where I should sit a songsmith & invent

## **MEMORIUM TO THE PASSAGE OF TIME**

Shelley has somehow made my library  
& instantly I muse back to that time,  
Far from these heady days in Sicily,

When Tuscany *enthubulised* my rhyme,

Remembering that perfect Pisan clime  
When Kapitano drank thro one brief fling  
Arno beside, & as I sang sublime  
He pluck'd our lira like a beggar-king,

I pass'd many siestas composing  
Pretences of dining with Byron's crew,  
Now summer rises from the finest spring  
& six years on those dreams I had seem true,

Wintering in Sicily's hinterland,  
A palace & a pen on either hand.

### **THE BATTLE OF THE AEGADI (241 BC)**

Tween Trapani & fair farfallan isle  
The fleets of Rome & Carthage meet at last,  
The captain of an age the day would prove  
& as the tides of battle ebb & flow  
A shepherd hears their furious phrenzie

Come nightfall leads his flock toward the shore  
The dead's crude stench uprisen with the sun  
Heart-wrenching was! A sorry scene of war,  
Who is conquer'd, who is the conqueror  
He could not tell, a sanguine sea bestrawn  
With floating corpses, men condemn'd to die  
In hopeless sacrifice, this crimson cove  
Would never wash the bloodshed from its rocks,  
Like rich red wine advance white, cotton sheets.

## **THE GRAND TOUR CONTINUED**

Ascending Aetna Linguaglossa shrank  
From five-year-flow fresh Astralagus grow  
Their fathers, further up the northern flank,  
Stand with stripp'd birch,  
Mist blankets sloping snow,  
Feet, round circlet of seven cinder hills,

Defy these fierce & fresh midwinter chills

Salubrious Sartorious behind

Crossing scenes from Saturn centuries cool

This Chestnut of a Hundred Horses find

Natural church,

Lord of life renewel

Long 'fore old Homer walk'd the Trojan shore

Ye thrust a happy sapling through Earth's floor.

## **MARZEMI SUNRISE**

As all the sky grew lighter at the change,  
With pastel arms, from rich & vivid heart  
Emboldening & merging with god's art,  
The peachy dawn reach'd round the 'risons' range,  
As milk-white sea caressess curls to shore,  
Wave kisses rock, bows gracefully, takes leave,  
Where rising from the lands of make-believe,  
The red, all-seeing eye that I adore.

Though you are far away in outer space,  
All other thoughtwaves crumble into dust,  
Filling with feelings more than love or lust

My humble soul enters that special place  
Of two spirits conjoined by nature's hand,  
One omnipresent, one a grain of sand.

### GRECIA

During the long course of my poethood  
My song I have prepared for this moment  
At last! to Grecia by my Muses sent  
& in my heart I knew they always would!

Upon Italic plateaux I have stood  
Hoping to glimpse her shores through mountains bent  
Between the mists, that shuffle innocent  
From peak to peak, as only phantoms could!

Am I some Telemachos coming home?  
Or Eumea drifting in from Elis?  
Or Phaecian vessel spurting thro the foam  
When in the hold slumbers Odysseus?

I am these things, & many more beside  
For they still live til poetry has died!

## EXHORTATION FROM OLYMPIA

If the world that you live for is noble  
& to do yer damn best is yer dream  
You must train through the pain & the rain, son,  
Then you might just get in the team.

Then its time to alight on the beaches  
For your captain, your country & all  
Thats when passion becomes more a duty  
& yer name might just hang off a wall

So c'mon, lad, you know yer can do it  
Dig down deeper than you've dug before  
With the grace of the gods in thy favour  
You might just win it, no matter how sore

Yes, you might be a true bloody hero,  
What the hell are yer waiting for!?

## ON DEPARTING THE SANCTUARY OF OLYMPIA

Until we meet again, Olympia!  
When I shall raise my daughter to the height  
    A toddling flame  
& as the morn-pink roses, would show her  
The very scene & in the very light  
    I chose her name

As I sit waiting, Sally, for a bus  
To Tropea or Pirgos, either way,  
    I think of thee!  
& wonder if the future holds for us  
A glitter-girl to please us in her play  
    Our bouncing bee

Who, when she's sleeping looks as sweet as you  
    & laughing, me!

## STERCA HELLAS

Where Autumn-tinted peaks rose glorious  
I hitch'd a lift, this lorry-load of bales  
Pass'd little houses singing hearth-side tales,  
Old stories of those hoary, mountainous  
Regions, where range hardy handsome hunters,  
Fed by their ever-fattening females,  
Where taxidermy, of all arts, prevails,  
& portraits hang with pride for ancestors!

The Mornou Dam sits like a precious stone,  
Heart of a highland chain that god-like rings  
This world where only poets dare to chance,  
& each of them, I sense, was once a throne  
For spirits older than Olympic kings,  
Where Cronos dined & Titans loved to dance.

## TO DELPHI

As careful steps & aiming for the post  
Must bring us ever closer to our goal,  
Thro' sharp-barb'd, thorny burnett hack'd my feet,  
Urg'd on by robins perch'd on pungent spurge.

Along an ancyent path of broken stones,  
Which Idomenus trod before the truce,  
I mountain-goated past four snarling hounds,  
Stone-shower scatter'd, man's best friend or nay!

The bravest snarl-follows at a distance,  
A fine black bitch, til gladly I arrive  
By Delphi's walls, a troubadour no more,  
Strange tortoise, with a home flat on my back,

Ready to rest, & write, & relish life,  
Upon the rocks where Orpheus once roam'd!

CASTALLIAN SPRING

So this is the heartbeat of poetry,  
From holy Parnassus, uprising sheer,  
Chaldean waters of empyrean,  
Pulse down from such a theatre of stone,  
Them pouring thro' the depths of my studies,  
Where in a sketch I see gargoyle faces  
Perhaps by Hobhouse in Lord Byron's life  
Who came up, too, to taste this ancyent spring  
Upon his very famous '*Pilgrimage*,'  
While mine is ended here... I sup the mead  
A hint of minerals, revitalised,  
I swear to all my Muses I shall be  
A poet still, & if they ride with me  
To England, I shall build them temples there!

### THIRTY STIRLING

Thirty Stirling from Thessalonika

I paused a moment with my golden race  
One of those places no-one ever goes  
Where only true poetry can take ya

With a two-litre bottle of rose  
& a view, & the sun, & the moment  
When mounting Mount Parnassus has just leant  
A certain special magic to the day

I dream of *Silver Roses* to be found  
Across the world in sites yet to be seen  
& of the children I am pois'd to ween  
To buy for each an island & a hound

A terrier for most, but for the best  
A spaniel with splashes on its chest!

## **KOLONOS**

Napoleon, in Amiens, the crown!

Wrested from papal clutches, his own hands  
Placed steel upon his brow, Corsican clown  
No longer, but an emperor of lands!

I came upon a plain of dreams & steam  
A spartan in my body, duty, rhyme  
Where Leonidas & his polis' cream  
Defied the best of Persia in their prime

On noble Kolonos a monument  
Topp'd by this laurel wreath, I gladly felt  
That thro the muses it was sent to me  
As I before phoenician letters knelt

Bending the branch into a perfect ring  
& crown'd myself, at last, a poet-king!

### CALLIOPE'S CROWN

Zeusian eagles hover'd oer the folds  
Where I collected firewood, meanwhile  
Immersed in poesy's pristeen reverie  
Of lofty pitch & classical alludes

The constitutions of a younger vow  
Lay fully realized, bare hundred lines  
All that remained from thousands imagin'd  
From pulse initial to a final form.

Above us rose Olympus, tree-green gorge  
Echoes these epic chauntings to the gods  
With ghostly, half-minoan bursts of joy.

Far from the heavings of society,  
I cook wild stew in Castallian mead,  
Flavour'd by mountain herbs, & cared for naught.

### **EMAIL FROM THERMOPYLAE**

As every maid Odysseus possess'd  
Pinn'd Telemachus, home, hard to their breast...

I want to wake beside you every day  
Tell you I love you, ask if you're OK  
Give you a kiss if you're going to work  
Or hide if you're menstrual & going bezerk

For ye are the one thing I crave here the most  
Ycamped on the crest of this ocean coast  
Where under me sea nymphs whisper your name  
While above glitter stars with your eye-light's flame

As an eagle glides by me as deft as you do  
All these & this singing reminds me of you  
For you are the music that livens my drumming  
Be patient, my love, I am coming...

### **37,000 ft**

Across Europa we have both progress'd,  
By foot, by boat, by tram, by bus, by train,  
But this hour, from a cool & pleasant plane,  
Sees me sailing air on a grander quest,  
The scenes by cyan skies & soft cloud blest,  
How seldom seen & varied the terrain  
Of ashen peak, urban sprawl, verdant plain,  
Gleaming sea, wastes of sand & wylde forest.

As soon as we abandon Europa,  
I could already taste the eastern scent,  
The sun was setting west of Syria,  
The starry heavens singing its lament,  
As somewhere yon the grey Arabia  
My pilot was beginning his descent.

## MUMBAI

Our plane approaches as the ghostly wraith,  
Through nights black regions steadily she falls  
Into this lab'rynthe of a billion souls,  
Vast myriad of language, race & faith.

So I am come, come to this sultry shore,  
First diamond of the crown Victorian  
Earth's epicentre of empyrean  
A melting pot of empires to explore.

By Eastern flair was Western thought inspired  
I am recently led to understand,

With me I have fetched a mind of England  
& all the love of beauty there acquired.

Swooning beneath an infant urchins, "*Please!*"  
How many times shall I see sights like these?

### THE EAR CLEANER

Stepping out one golden Goan morning,  
Drowsy with the sunken sun's adorning,  
Content I was to be in nature's hand,  
Soul-freshen'd as bare feet sunk into sand,

From out of nowhere stept a wizen'd man,  
"*Sahib! cleaning your hearing well I can!*"  
Shows Western praises in his little book,  
Black blocks of wax from both my ears he took

I shook the hand that scrubb'd my hearing clear  
Said fond farewells & watch'd him disappear  
Round red & rugged hill flank'd by the view

Of Konkan coast careering into blue,  
When first found I the profits of his fee  
I'd never known how sweetly sounds the sea!

### KERI BEACH

I watch'd the reaching out of Dawn's arms red,  
Both wrapp'd about the beach on which I led,  
Saw little twitters skip the zenith crest  
Of waves flung shorewards, falling foam abreast,  
Ahead, the full moon gave the waves good gold,  
Behind, deep-banded amber branding bold,  
When starry rays made way for planets three,  
They, too, into the blue illume did flee.

As round the moon floating rose-fingers meet,  
Morn's cyan-curtain'd opening complete,  
As fishermen & dogs begin day's dance  
Still on the sands I lay, a man entranc'd,  
For as the full moon into air distills,

What flaming sun-chink winks out from the hills!

## OLD GOA

They were the first white faces to arrive,  
& the last fascist faeces to depart,  
Whence inbetween a race envangelized;  
You can still taste the breeze of the Tagus  
By Mandovi, in spacious Spanish rooms  
One takes whenever pausing in Panjim,  
O pocket Portuguese emporium!

The stuff of fallen empires lingers near,  
Array'd as if an eastern Nuremburg  
Had Speer inspired, these barrel-vaulted rooves  
So cleverly conserv'd, where faded scenes,  
Like Shivapurams on a temple wall,  
Paint papal hagiographies, spread proud,

Around us in the old Latino style!

## CREATION

Parking my scooter in Canacona  
A great prostrate cow seem'd to be dying  
Guts on the pavement where she was lying  
But no... close by lay her hour-old daughter

I watch'd the wee one make her falt'ring first  
Steps in the world, like an ambitious teen,  
Thro her mother's dung, slippery & green  
Then in the hot noon felt an earthly thirst

Went looking for something, nuzzling half-blind  
She suckles on her mother's rough larynx  
Who stood up, stands motionless as a sphinx,  
& with a lick acknowledges her kind,

Who now creeps forward to the golden teat

& clamps down hard as angels swoop'd the street

### **TO ALL THE GIRLS I'VE EVER NAILED**

To all the girls I've ever nailed  
There's only one time I kinda failed  
I had just been degirlin' in Goa  
When a few fumbles after getting it together  
She's agate 'STOP!' but, y'know, I weren't that bothered  
Trust me, mi mojo promptly recovered  
& I found that the girls were all digging mi chat  
I mean... A poet from Burnley in a right dapper hat!

So... deep down I know some were better in bed,  
But I've loved every minute, girls, pathways we tread  
All glittering gold thro your slipped off bikinis  
To trust's lamburghinis, up lust's kundalinis  
We surf'd the exotic... frantic... tantric... calm  
All aboard mine art's duties, thy beauties to charm.

## THE INCREDIBLE INDIA CODE

- 1 Book your tickets in advance
- 2 Expect the unexpected
- 3 Never trust a tout
- 4 Keep tabs on yer tabs
- 5 If they say they're a masseuse – they're not
- 6 Murder mosquitoes before bed
- 7 Never trust a fart
- 8 Anything is possible in India
- 9 Check your room thoroughly before leaving
- 10 Picking up stones scares off monkeys & dogs
- 11 Eat with your non-wiping hand
- 12 *"I was an Indian in another life!"*
- 13 Plenty of change for journeys
- 14 Ask five different people for directions

## SARASWATHI

Before first footfall in this India  
I'd convers'd with a Winchester hippy  
Who said, "*Son when you reach that rat-rich realm  
Beware of nothing but your lack of soul  
& choose a god, although the gods choose you.*"

So with that wise advice I took the field  
Where in a moment of the truth sublime  
I found a goddess, or did she find me  
Chief escort & courtesan of the Raj  
Vedic apolless, lyre & art entwined  
With us in all we muse, her temple found  
Innocuous in Vijayanagar

Where she was shining as a silver star,  
Singing '*Jaya Saraswathi Matha...*'

## MY GODDESS

I fixt mine inner eye upon a star,  
In darshan disturbing this diety,  
Lull'd by the tantric strains of her sitar  
The purest drop of goddess flew to me

Upon a swan of hue ambrosial,  
Her fertile smile still'd time, her luted look  
My hearts consort - sublimely cordial  
She read from the Pustaka's sacred book

*"Wand' rer, thou art welcom'd to India,  
This sari I have sewn know as thy guide,  
Where e'er she willows there stay close behind!"*

She closed the page, sail'd high skies to Brahma,  
Perform'd the blissful duties of a bride,  
Rare have I seen such beauties in my mind.

## KARANCI

I took a breath or two of night time air  
My heart not knowing why, my legs not where  
The starry skies obscured by gremlin cloud  
I headed for the hilltop temple loud  
Where rattled such a throng of Saivite  
Songs echoing thro Niligrisian night  
Seeming another Tuscany to me  
For India oft feels like Italy  
& all was silver as a Silver Oak  
For searing thro the deep & astral smoke  
I found there was a full moon pulling clear  
Are these the moments poets hold so dear  
Thro selene scenes setting dream-trails in store  
When ´morrow morns may pass these ways once more.

## INDIAN RAILWAYS

I found myself waiting at this train station  
Not for a train, it was just to buy a ticket  
Not even for that day, but eleven in the future  
The next one available from Fort Cochin to Calicut  
So I'm waiting & waiting & I'm waiting nit-pick longer  
& the guy behind the desk's on his third guy in an hour  
& I was fourth, but the seventh guy's hand starts waving  
His reservation form as the third guy was about to finish  
So I warned fifth, sixth, & seventh they'd be a foolish to try linecuttin'  
after all, I'd been walking in the sun all day like a mad English dog  
& my legs felt like lead & I was definitely, definitely, going next...

So the third guy finishes & just as I thrust my form through the window  
The guy behind the desk decides its time he went to the toilet  
& when he gets back, the scoundrel closed his window fer lunch!

## FORT COCHIN

Come share a second with serenity  
Up in this lake of European rooves,  
This crescent lamp'd oer th'Arabian sea  
Lulls me thither, I hear the sound of hooves...

*At once a sacred chime grows on the breeze,  
Some teller of a thousand ancient tayles,  
Some from the world's crop-fellers overseas,  
Some cross the Karakoram's lofty trails,  
Some were seekers of immortal glory,  
Some content to be husbands, to be wives...*

Though the vision all clutter'd & hoary,  
With me a single memory survives,  
Being extras in the global story  
We are stars in the movies of our lives.

## KANYAKAMARI

I stepp'd onto Vivikenanda's rock  
There paus'd, of situation took full stock,  
Before me, some vast fan, India spread,  
Behind, lay endless ocean, grey as lead  
Above, & to the side, a statue rose  
Some noble poet in his noblest pose  
& I gazed I swear he winked at me

Into my mind th'Orphean frequency  
Sang, *'Boy, wherever in the world ye be*  
*Remember me!'...*

*'TisThiruvalluvar!*

Says saddhu, startl'd by me, who had seen  
Or sens'd a dream twyx poets, inbetween  
A butterfly thro' silver sea-spray flew...

...The boat-bell rang, I sprang to join the queue

## THIRUVALLUVAR

As I rested on a fine, empty beach, by the Bay of Bengal  
In a soft second of existence I was alerted to a flutter of birds  
A mile or so along the coast I saw a distant figure approaching.  
An old man swathed in white robes, sporting a thick, black beard,  
I expected him to pass, but as he came to within a few metres  
He veer'd slowly towards me, leaving nor footsteps in the sand,  
*"What is your profession?"* he curtly asked, *"I am a sonneteer, sir!"*  
His magnificent eyes burrowed into the heartlands of my soul  
*"By any chance, are you carrying a silver rose?"*  
Astonish'd, I show'd him the flower hung around my neck...

...After humming an Upanishad he said, *"I've been expecting you,  
As seven words a kural make, seven kural form a sonnet!"*  
This was for me high epiphany to the hidden depths of sonnetry!

## TRANSLATIONS FROM THIRUKKURAL

As 'A's announce alphabets  
Divinity initiates existence (1;1)

Rain's continuance preserves existence  
Speaketh, then, ambrosia (2:1)

Falsehood conferring faultless fruitfulness  
Nature's truth contains (30:2)

Kingly fame fades forgotten  
Without righteous government (56:6)

When soldiers fear bloodshed  
Kings cry destitute (77:1)

In miserable poverty's train  
Many more miseries (105:5)

Her jewels perplex me  
Celestial? Peahen? Women? (109:1)

## NALATIYAR

### *Her :*

- O lord of fertile land & everflowing waterfalls
- O lord of cool sunshine warming ocean's running waves
- O lord of good country with beautiful ebony mountains
- O lord of flowery hills with lush & sparkling waterfalls
- O lord of honey-bearing woods in the good country
- O lord of long seashore with fine, unfailing salt-pans
- O lord of the hills with lovely sandal groves on
- O lord of cool lagoons & bays brimming with water
- O lord of prosperous vineyards & huge gem-studded caverns

### *Him :*

- O beautiful lady with breasts like budding flowers
- O lady of beautiful hair with fragrance of musk
- O lady of long-eyed spears & bow-like eyebrows

### *Him & Her*

- O lord of bewitching victories bring these beauties to me

Ever since an eager mentioning  
I have dream'd of Diwali  
Not knowing what its festival entail'd  
Until today  
When a rocket rushing past my cheek  
Warns me of India's unpredictability

Awoken by vietcong firecrackers  
Echoing the brutal death of Ravana  
The Chennai night ablaze in light & magic  
From hotel rooves  
Watch the wide smiles of fathers on motorbikes  
Carrying Catherine wheels to the bambini

& for once, the arms-width, one room'd shanty shacks  
Are more affable than the harbours of Saint Tropez

**DEPARTING FOR ANDAMAN**

Gazing across exotic ocean stream  
Shamrock musing drifts to distant Burnley,  
Where for as long as breathing there shall be  
My family, my friends, my football team –

So far away, for following my dream  
I am a stranger in a strange contree,  
Though slowly hook'd upon its cup of tea,  
Darjeeling serv'd up with a Devon cream.

The sun has fallen & the ship has sail'd,  
The last lamps of the mainland shrink & fade,  
A momentary notion has prevail'd  
As Vagu & Varuna soft notes play'd

Next time by solid ground my feet regaled  
Into youth's fleeting heart I shall have stray'd.

**SHIPWRECK'D**

Down southern Andaman lies Jolly Bouy  
Thick with bright coral & of snorkling joy  
I spent an hour lagooning in a laze  
& fell astoned... then woke... to my amaze  
The boat had left me... deserted, alone,  
No rizlas, samosas, water, nor phone

A mile or so across the sharky foam  
A trail of smoke show'd someone was at home,  
& so I built a raft but that soon sank,  
So off I swam, my goddess I should thank  
For showing me this was a wild riptide  
My muscles haul'd me back, I'd nearly died

Then shouting to some boats around sunset,  
I was the strangest fish they'd ever net.

## AVATARAS

At the back of the ship, at the height of the trip,  
Drawn by the harmonies of Lord Vishnu's call,  
I saw cross the waters navel rooted lotus  
Absorbing the beauteous bay of Bengal,

Transcending to milk, pearly seaway of silk,  
Thou lavender cushion of infinite white,  
Surrounding the foetal spirit centripetal  
Sucking upon toenails painted starry bright.

*"Rider, thou art return'd to India,  
Saraswathi, I see, has smil'd on you,  
Thy mortal aura bless'd in her prayer,  
Thine energies hued in a rainstorm blue,  
Come drape thyself in the Himalaya,  
For there, thy Silver Roses shall renew."*

## **HYBRIDABAD**

Give me Saint Andrews with sea-views & putter  
Or take me to Ascot to big-shot & flutter  
Give me a hot-pot with good bread & butter  
Or if not, just give me Calcutta

Give me the mornings stroll 'long the Maidan

Give me the games grand Garden of Eden  
Give me the Hoogley's green glide Thamesian  
Whenever I yearn for my London

For as she was once the pulse of an Empire  
& Edinburgh the mind that built the Raj  
Then surely this great city was its soul

Where men would recreate their distant shire  
Carving an architectural mirage  
From native rocks, where hungry coolies crawl.

## **KATIHAR**

There is a certain sadness in this land  
The handicapp'd are heap'd upon my heart  
The twisted feet of those too low to stand  
& me, all in their midst, but set apart  
& when I wait to catch the midnight train  
So many shudras spread about the floor  
A spell of blessed respite to obtain  
From drudgeries of being born so poor

& like the swine from meal to meal subsists  
Therein lies the archaic chaff of wheat  
On which this young democracy insists  
"Caste is caste & never the twain shall meet!"  
& even dreamlands which all equal share  
Disturb'd here by the tannoy's constant blare

### KANGCHENZONGA

I came on Pemagantse in the night  
A leopard passing slowly in the snow  
& waited til a precious pinch of light  
Announced the phoenix day in foetal glow

I gazed across the Kabrus unaware  
That to these climes had Calliope come  
Slopes gloomy grey, as sunbeams fill the air  
They turn the burnish'd burgondy of rum

Savitri's spell impells the Sun to strength  
Red turns to orange, orange burns to gold  
& as all shadows shorten in their length  
What summit sparkles white, where, very cold,

My muse sits, singing, wisest of the nine  
*"On Nanda Devi waits my sister's sign!"*

## GOD

I march on different minds in different ways  
A force beyond all knowledges combined  
But let it now be known to each on Earth  
I have a single name & that be *God*  
Tho splintered by the tangl'd knot of tongues  
For as a man in Orchaa callas me *Ram*  
In Qadian as *Allah* I am praised  
Now let us reconcile these diff'rences  
To every race a prophet I have sent

& filled them with the milk of mine intent,  
A source of common good, a common source,  
From which the well-fount of my message springs,  
A clear soul-song for all who wish to hear  
Through me find Heaven & in Heaven, Love!

## NANDA DEVI

Up to the world's rooftop I slowly rose;  
Checking upon the progress of the soul  
Appears a mountain prospect a la snows  
Of Austria, New Zealand & Nepal.

I left Almora for the Kashyap Hill,  
High commune of fairest tranquility,  
Fresh dawning drew me to the lofty chill  
Of this monolithic Axis Mundi.

It seems for me the lips of Laksmi smile,  
No sweeter place on earth to greet the sun,  
Here summon'd by the lyrical lifestyle,  
I whisper a gentle dedication;

*"Until my feet have circuited the globe  
My thought & life with poesy I shall robe."*

### **PHONE CALL FROM AGRA**

I was staring at the back of this rickshaw driver's neck  
As I dragged my bags thro Agra, the Taj now just a speck  
Of love dust immemorial, my minds eye to recall  
Whene'er long life should ache deep for some sheer uplift of soul;

In that place grew pure poetry, man-made & yet divine,  
A funerary megalith whose Mughal marble wine,  
Endrenches human spiritus with splendour thro' its form,  
All races & all nations round its majesty must swarm.

As I depart for Gwalior I think of absent touch,  
For she was like a queen to me, I loved her love so much,  
& haunted by her happy smile I've wandered far, alone,  
Til mental peace has found me all my fuck-ups to atone.

So I shall get my mobile out & make that magic call -  
Her voice was soft & happy - back in Sally's love I fall.

### RAI PRAVEEN

Beside the bonnie banks of Betwa's stream  
A beauty dwelt, beholding her a dream,  
Her reputation to great Akbar flew  
Whose regal claws she to his throne-room drew  
But noble are Bundellas & their queens  
& so played out the most wondrous of scenes  
As with a poem she made devlish dig  
*'Hello King! You are King, not dog, nor pig,  
& I am nothing but a plate well-used...'*  
Lord Akbar gasped, & gazed on her confused,  
While shell-shock'd audience grew hushly sure  
Such grave insult His Highness shan't endure  
But no! Life's nobler motions to protect  
He sent her home, alive & with respect.

## OVERTAKING LANES

Two saddus stood by the side of the road  
Staring at a truck that had spill'd it's load  
By that, an old wreck that just would not start  
Bypass'd by a man in an ox-drawn cart,  
& faster still; first a cycle rickshaw,  
A dull green tractor from the days of yore,  
Auto-rickshaw belching dirty black smoke,  
Bright red scooter missing many-a-spoke,  
Some weird lorry's siren psychedelics,  
Bus driven by two mad alcoholics,  
These by breezy motorcycle bypass'd  
Then last, & an Ambassador of Rajput caste,  
O lawless highways brave gangs of robbers stalk  
You know, it's a nice day, I think I'll walk.

## **POVERTY & WEALTH**

Two goddesses bickered about beauty  
Prepared to start a second Trojan war  
Srinava's wisdom thunders crore on crore  
My Jyesthadevi, my Laksmidevi  
There is a young carpenter of Bundi  
Who is so very honest to his core  
& soon they both were standing at his door  
*"Who is the most beautiful, she or me?"*

Our humble cobbler thought a mortal while  
& says Laksmi most lovely on arriving  
Yet Jyestha more gorgeous when she departs  
This answer made each goddess equal smile  
& he, celestial wrath surviving,  
Learns flattery woos e'en immortal hearts

## JAIT SAGAR

If India can make a man a man,  
More than the veshyalay of Amsterdam,  
If thro the chaos he can make a plan,  
Respecting Hinduism & Islam,

If he can give the beggar his rupee  
& tip the tout that charges o'er the odds,  
If he can read his Rajput history  
& choose a god but still bless other gods,

If he can sleep upon the railway run,  
Find fresh, clean waterfalls amid the dirt,  
If he can wonder how the Raj was won,  
Then pause upon the horrors & the hurt,

If he can haggle down & know his daal,  
Then does he need to see the Taj Mahal?

## OMKERASHWAR

One morning in the bustling JP Choke  
That serves Omkerashwar's most sacred space  
Of rivers, lingams, islanders & Ram,  
I heard a solid thud & turn'd to see  
Between the unused spearheads of their horns  
Two proud, white street goats crack each other's skulls  
Then rear again as if they did salute  
Each other's prowess in the sports of war.

A gather'd crowd stood wincing at each blow  
Until the loser stagger'd from the bout  
To ten yards later find some unshell'd peas  
These I stroll'd past, quite bridgewards, to the isle  
Where Kaveri & old Namarda meet,  
& Jyotirlinga lifts the married mind.

## A FOND FAREWELL

I rule a final walk about Mumbai  
From tranquil Dawn to Middle Morning's heat  
Where as I breach the bustle of the street  
Twyx measured steps my senses amplify  
For flashing colours decorate the eye  
& finger'd foods both savoury & sweet  
Dance off the tongue, as Vedic songs compete  
To treat our ears each side of vendor's cry.

Ghosting amidst these citizens unseen  
I see three six-year waifs rake rubbish heap  
For plastic bottles drain'd by richer lives...

This is the sweetest place I've ever been,  
Whose happiness I shall forever keep  
While Saraswathi in my soul survives.

## INDIA

Nation of nations, hot & happy land!  
With spicy dishes morsell'd by the hand,  
Being a valourous & graceful race,  
Thy universal mullet firm in place,  
Despite taking three men to stamp a form  
& creative corruption Laksmi's norm,  
A fanatacism for the rupee  
Cements this secular society  
Of power-cuts & cripples & bazaars  
Neath a pristine panapoly of stars,  
Of swastikas & cricket in the streets,  
Bounteous crops & oversugar'd sweets,  
Ashrams soothing riot-torn religion  
Where always blaze the rays of Asia's sun.

## DEPARTING INDIA

A decade pass'd since that piazza  
Where first I flirted with the myrtle muse,  
Now knoweth I a new peninsula  
Whose galaxy of monuments enthuse  
The spiritus, where all Earthly aspects  
Have form'd a microcosm of the sphere,  
A foundation for when I travel next,  
Days of endeavour drawing ever near.

I spend a moment, musing on the wing,  
As oer the sea of Araby we sail'd;  
Around the Raj was flung a faerie ring  
& all it's channel'd poesis regaled,  
I have succeeded in my soldiering  
Where Ghengiz Khan & Alexander fail'd.

## MEETINGS

At last my gaze is cast oer English skies,  
The thrills of one's homecoming multiply,  
Bursting through cloud we claim a poet's prize;  
Big Ben...Tower Bridge... & the London Eye.

& I am back, back from my epic tour,  
Ten rupees all that furnishes my purse,  
Scraggly & tann'd I call upon the door  
Of compassion & an NHS nurse.

*"Well I got shot, I gush'd out dysentry,  
Wee mozzy bites became massive bags of puss,  
Salmonella, concussion, entwisted knee,  
Neuropraxia... Love, just look at us!"*

*"It's lucky you survived" ... I smil'd a smile,  
"Dying," said I, "It's never been my style."*

## KARMA SUTRA

The city streets were alive with neon,  
I knock'd... Rosie answer'd there delighted,  
My favourite *more-than-friend* down London,  
Her stairs were excitedly alighted.

I cook'd up a couple of samosas,  
Chappathis, biriyani & paneer,  
Making out to the Stars & the Roses  
Over charas & charlie & cold beer.

I show'd her a book bought in Madurai,  
The Karma Sutra's esoteric scene,  
*"So babe, do you wanna give it a try?"*  
We did & at a later hour serene

My lover sleeping on my naked chest  
I felt that special bliss when East meets West.

## TRANSLATING NALATIYAR

Pendle obscured by fog  
Bulging in my pocket  
Tamil literature's priceless Koh-i-noor  
Bodyclock revolving Bombay time  
Tranquil parkland hiking  
Toes & fingers numbing  
Tamil texts in Towneley  
Ancient Jain gnosis  
Thirukural's esteem'd sacred sister  
Baynan & Margosa  
Vital lamps lighting all mortality  
Converting quatrains into Kural  
Many miles from Madurai  
O remarkable poetical sensations!

## NOW THAT I AM THIRTY-ONE

Upon an evening's ride I rode beside the Forth's firth-spray  
& glanced back on a time-lapse t'when I last made verse this way  
Since then I've loved an angel & I've loved her many years  
But left her... for the bard inside still yearn'd to join the seers

I have blended song & dialogue across eclectic stage  
& thrilled my friends with travelogue-emboss'd electric page  
Upon the way I transcreated Tamil Nad's first saint  
& learn'd enough of woman's ways to woo without complaint

I have composed in Italian round Egadian seas  
Broke bread with smart, young Indians, beers by Kadevi's breeze  
I have founded several festivals, for Bacchus, with my lyre  
& swapped my native terrace for a palace in the Shire

Where, yes, I am still learning how a poet *must* get on  
For the world just keeps on turning now that I am thirty-one!

## MY PENELOPE

Every English poet needs a princess,  
Of them, a haelan lassie best presume,  
Who sprinkle perfumed petals of noblesse  
Whene'er they deign to dignify a room!

As now I make that tender step in time  
Back to the hearth of all my happiness  
She stands, the essence of this will to rhyme  
Aloof, alone, in all her loveliness...

*'My love,' I said, 'Back then I buck'd so blind,  
But now I see you, Sally, soft & pure,  
You are the motion that must move my mind,  
For my heart's sickness are the only cure!'*

Outside our love's bulb burst through frozen earth,  
Within, through Sally's kiss, blissful rebirth!

## AS I SAIL LOVESICK HARBOURS

*"Thou art to me my moist & nearly bride,  
No longer must I roam these islands wide*

*Searching for perfect springs of nature's art,  
For you are all those things that win my heart;*

*Yes, we converse with eloquence freely,  
& we fancy each other quite clearly,  
Make wild love like two foxes in season  
& both lovely when life gives us reason*

*Kiss me, kiss me again, & hold my hand,  
These are the softest strings of love's demand,  
Cuddles, caresses, kisses, blisses, sighs -  
What trysts of tender beddiness reprise*

*All these are ours, & them all in a whirl  
As I sail lovesick harbours to my girl!"*

**A HAPPY ENDING!**

To morning's nest from nightlife's restless bed  
At last, my soul with its first love-mate led,

I've travell'd many shores & grown more wise  
& with the humblest voice apologize...

This is the proper way men woo their wives,  
Thro' faith & understanding love survives,  
As I strok'd Sally's silky snow-white skin,  
I sens'd, I swear, Olympia within...

Onto the airy, pinnacle of pride  
I stepp'd, there Sally ask'd to be my bride  
She, with a searing smile, bright-answer'd yes  
& felt I then England's Odysseus

When, with this won proposal, I propose,  
To press the petals of this *Silver Rose!*