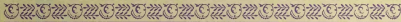


WHEN GRAPES TURN TO WINE

Versions of Rumi by Robert Bly



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Yellow Moon Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1986



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Printed in the United States of America.
ISBN 0-938756-16-8 Trade edition

This is a reprint of the 1983 letterpress
edition by Firefly Press. Designed by John
Kristensen and Carl Kay of Firefly Press.

YELLOW MOON PRESS
P.O. Box 1316
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02238
(617) 628-7894
Catalog available upon request.

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Rumi lived in the Near East from 1207–1273. He was trained as a scholar and as a Sufi initiate. In 1244 he was living in Konya, Turkey when he met the wanderer Shams of Tabriz. The exchange with his teacher and friend Shams catalyzed the transformation of Rumi into an ecstatic dancer, singer of poems and teacher who greatly influenced Sufism.

In recent years there has been a growing hunger in the industrialized nations for contact with the authentic ecstatic traditions of the world. The Victorian era translations of Rumi were completely inadequate to this task. Robert Bly, eminent poet and translator, has undertaken among his many projects to publish new versions of the mystic poets Kabir, Mirabai and Rumi. A previous volume of Rumi versions by Robert Bly was published as *Night & Sleep* by Yellow Moon Press, Brighton, Massachusetts, in 1981. Bly often includes works by Rumi in his stimulating public readings across the United States and abroad.



WINNING OR LOSING

You are the notes, and we are the flute.

We are the mountain, you are the sounds coming down.

We are the pawns and kings and rooks

you set out on a board: they win or they lose.

We are lions rolling and unrolling on flags.

Your invisible wind carries us through the world.

NAMES

You should try to hear the name the Holy One has for things.
There is something in the phrase: "The Holy One taught him names."
We name everything according to the number of legs it has;
the other one names it according to what is inside.
Moses waved his stick; he thought it was a "rod".
But inside its name was "dragonish snake".
We thought the name of Umar was "agitator against God",
but in eternity his name is "the one who believes."
No one knows our name until our last breath goes out.

IT WAS ADAM WHO WEPT

Learn from your great-grandfather Adam!
When he lost the union, the tears
that fell from his face made every valley in Ceylon
 full of fragrant spices and herbs.
And you still say you cannot choose the road?
The stubborn angel said that.
And he was the one who refused praise to the inner man.
When a human being has experienced the ecstacy. he knows.
He doesn't say, "Please lay out your system of proofs for me."
From the outer layers of the unconscious, logic;
from the inner man, love.

WHEN GRAPES TURN TO WINE

When grapes turn
to wine, they long for our ability to change.

When stars wheel
around the North Pole,
they are longing for our growing consciousness.

Wine got drunk with us,
not the other way.
The body developed out of us, not we from it.

We are bees,
and our body is a honeycomb.
We made
the body, cell by cell we made it.

THE EDGE OF THE ROOF

I don't like it here, I want to go back.
According to the old Knowers
if you're absent from the one you love
even for one second that ruins the whole thing!

There must be someone . . . just to find
one *sign* of the other world in this town
would be enough.

You know the great Chinese Simurgh bird
got caught in this net . . .
And what can I do? I'm only a wren.

My desire-body, don't come
strolling over this way.
Sit where you are, that's a good place.

When you want dessert, you choose something rich.
In wine, you look for what is clear and firm.
What is the rest? The rest is mirages,
and blurry pictures, and milk mixed with water.
The rest is self-hatred, and mocking other people, and bombing.

So just be quiet and sit down.
The reason is—you are drunk,
and this is the edge of the roof.

THE JAR WITH THE DRY RIM

The mind is an ocean . . . and so many worlds
are rolling there, mysterious, dimly seen!
And our bodies? Our body is a cup, floating
on the ocean; soon it will fill, and sink . . .
Not even one bubble will show where it went down.

The spirit is so near that you can't see it!
But reach for it . . . don't be a jar
full of water, whose rim is always dry.
Don't be the rider who gallops all night
and never sees the horse that is beneath him.



THAT JOURNEYS ARE GOOD

If a fir tree had a foot or two like a turtle, or a wing,
do you think it would just wait for the saw to enter?

You know the sun journeys all night under the earth;
if it didn't, how could it throw up its flood of light in the east?

And salt water climbs with such marvellous swiftness to the sky.
If it didn't, how would the cabbages be fed with the rain?

Have you thought of Joseph lately? Didn't he leave his father in tears,
going?
Didn't he then learn how to understand dreams, and give away grain?

And that man with the long nose, didn't he leave his country, forced to,
and only then learned how to travel through the three worlds?

And you, if you can't leave your country, you could go into yourself.
And become a ruby mine, open to the gifts of the sun.

You could travel from your manhood into the inner man, or from
your womanhood into the inner woman—
by a journey of that sort earth became a place where you find gold.

So leave your complaints and self-pity and internalized death-energy.
Don't you realize how many fruits have already escaped out of sourness
into sweetness?

A good source of sweetness is a teacher, mine is named Shams.
You know every fruit grows more handsome in the light of the sun.

EATING POETRY

My poems resemble the bread of Egypt—one night passes over it, and you can't eat it any more.

So gobble them down now, while they're still fresh, before the dust of the world settles on them.

Where a poem belongs is here, in the warmth of the chest; out in the world it dies of cold.

You've seen a fish—put him on dry land, he quivers for a few minutes, and then is still.

And even if you eat my poems while they're still fresh, you still have to bring forward many images yourself.

Actually, friend, what you're eating is your own imagination. These are not just a bunch of old proverbs.

THE MILL, THE STONE, AND THE WATER

All our desire is a grain of wheat.
Our whole personality is the milling-building.
But this mill grinds without knowing about it.

The mill stone is your heavy body.
What makes the stone turn is your thought-river.
The stone says: I don't know why we do all this, but the river
has knowledge!

If you ask the river, it says,
I don't know why I flow.
All I know is that a human opened the gate!

And if you ask the person, he says:
All I know, oh gobbler of bread, is that if this stone
stops going around, there'll be no bread for your bread-soup!

All this grinding goes on, and no one has any knowledge!
So just be quiet, and one day turn
to God, and say: "What is this about bread-making?"

TWO KINDS OF MIRACLES

Miracles secret and open flow from the teacher.
With reason—that's not unusual at all.
And the tiniest of these miracles
is this: everyone near a saint gets drunk with God.

When a spiritual man lets the water hold up his feet
we are moved, because by ways we cannot see
the sight of that links
the soul back to the source of all lightness.

Of course a saint can move a mountain!
But who cares about that? How marvellous is the bread
made without dough, the dishes of food
that are invisible, Mary's grapes that never saw the vine!

THE HAWK

We are a little crazier now, and less sober, and some joy has risen
out of us . . . it was so glad to be gone . . .

When it noticed the sober watcher no longer was holding its
leg, it flew—

It is not in the mountains nor the marshes, it has sent itself
to be with the Holy One who is alone.

Don't look here and there in the house, it belongs to air,
it is made of air, and has gone into air.

This is a white hawk that belongs to Gawain's master;
it belongs to him and has gone to him.

THE DRUNKARDS

The drunkards are rolling in slowly, those who hold to wine are approaching.
The lovers come, singing, from the garden, the ones with brilliant eyes.

The I-don't-want-to-lives are leaving, and the I-want-to-lives are arriving.
They have gold sewn into their clothes, sewn in for those who have none.

Those with ribs showing who have been grazing in the old pasture of love
are turning up fat and frisky.

The souls of pure teachers are arriving like rays of sunlight
from so far up to the ground-huggers.

How marvellous is that garden, where apples and pears, both for the
sake of the two Marys,
are arriving even in winter.

Those apples grow from the Gift, and they sink back into the Gift.
It must be that they are coming from the garden to the garden.

