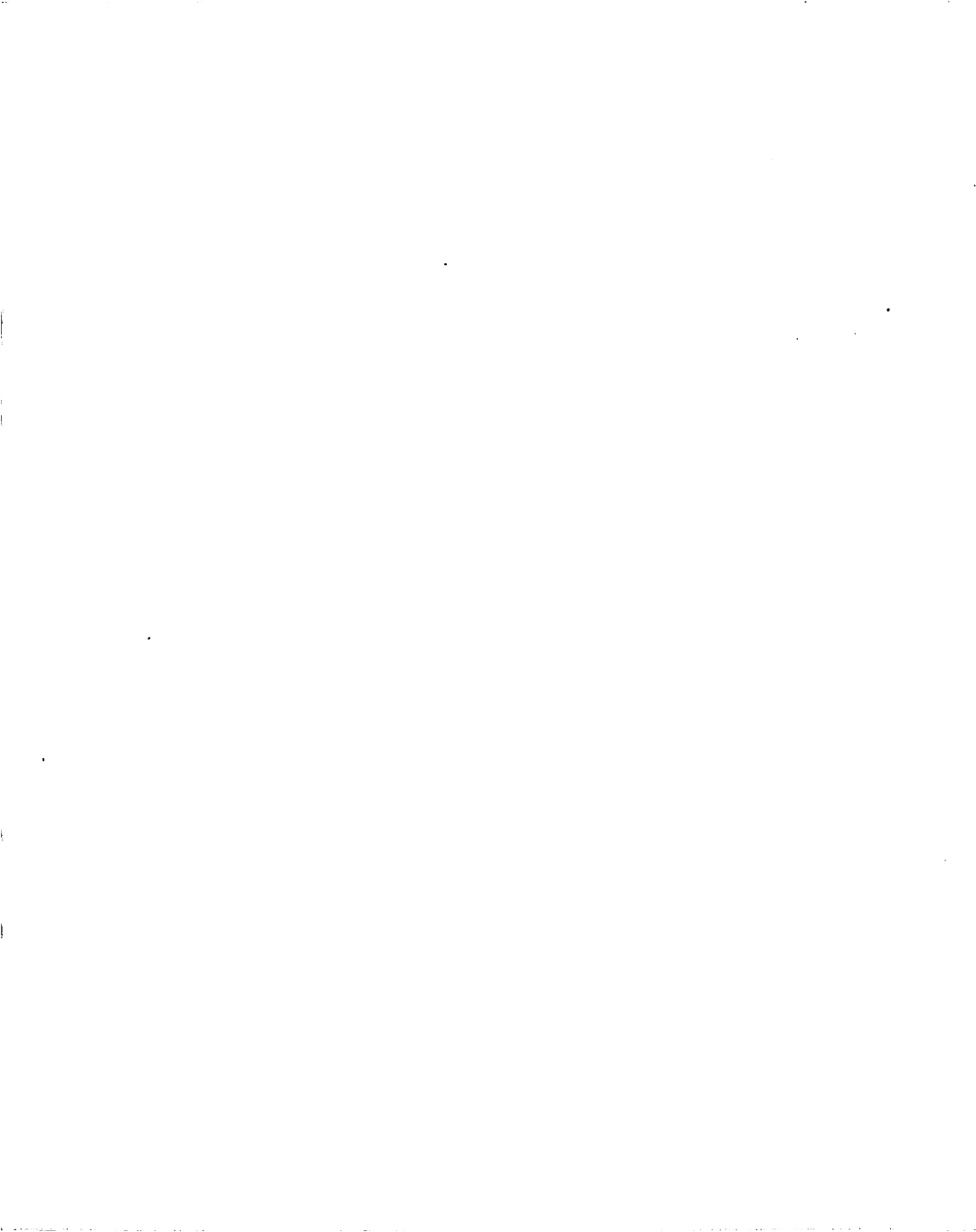


# THE WIND OF THE WORD.

*BY*  
*FRANCIS BRABAZON*







By the same author  
*Early Poems*  
*7 Stars to Morning*  
*Proletarians — Transition*  
*Cantos of Wandering*  
*Singing Threshold*  
*Let Us The People Sing*  
*East West Gathering*  
*Word at Worlds End*  
*In Dust I Sing*

1-701599

**Illustrations by Patricia Baker**

**Printed by R.J. Nisbet Pty. Ltd.  
for Garuda Publications**

# **THE WIND OF THE WORD**

**by Francis Brabazon**



I first met it out on the plains.  
It rushed in from the further West  
covering the sun and shrouding the trees  
with fall-out from the atomic Interior;  
and the trees marched back over the horizon.  
And it raced on. And I went with it.  
For it was the Wind's time to explore all places,  
sound all things that would sound — seeking a throat  
through which it could utter the Song  
locked in a Continent since the First Dreaming.

It strode with great strides like an obsession.  
It slid like a hand long starved of women.  
It drummed on the iron roofs of homesteads  
and dinned on the tin roofs of shacks.  
It seethed round the shiny filling-stations  
of petrol and beer and whistled over  
the graveyards of cans, old cars and bedsteads.  
And went on. It reared up over the coastal range  
like a thousand unbroken horses, and hurtled down  
like a field of Grand Prix cars out of control,  
tearing up trees and ripping down telephone lines;  
and lost itself for a while among banging doors  
and rattling windows in the suburbs of the city.

The smooth bitumen roads run out — to whom?  
They run on and on till they fall into  
the wrinkled arms of the sand.

The first roads  
were made by people from the cities  
seeking a New Song in the vast emptiness.  
Now the roads run back into the cities —  
the roads and the rains — leaving the country  
emptier than it was before men came,  
leaving men's signatures in erosions.

Driving along one of these roads through the night  
into a dawn of oyster-shells and roses,  
I pulled off the road and made a fire and tea.  
And I met the Wind again.  
It came up quietly, blew a little smoke  
into my eyes and caressed my ears. It  
was wrinkled with sand and corrugated roofs  
and smelt faintly of petrol and burnt oil.  
It said: I sigh in carburettors, hum  
along telephone lines  
and scream through diesel locomotive horns.  
How long before the Word gives me a Man-throat  
through which to sing a new song to the Word?



It was not complaining.  
It was challenging me to remember  
silences I had forgotten, music  
trembling on the edge of consciousness.  
Patiently, lovingly challenging me  
to remember.

And I went back to the years  
before I had met the Wind out on the plains —  
to the first years of remembering.



We were farming Australian soil — virgin  
since Creation, but for three generations.  
Soil with its own Song locked within it —  
waiting for us to listen and express it.  
But we were still English. England was Home.

At the wool-shed dances we danced English waltzes,  
schottisches, polkas and quadrilles to piano and fiddle.  
And at the two or three 'parties' a year  
the same items (after the same coaxings:  
Oh, do sing for us, Mrs. Steers. Do play,  
Gladys — you play beautifully.)  
*I have heard the mavis singing.*  
*Variations on Home Sweet Home.*  
And outside, the night and the ancient hills —  
their only voices the mopoke and fox.

Rain. Rain. Each drop a grain of wheat;  
and each cluster of drops a bunch of purple grapes.  
Rain.

The long pull up the Red Hill, lit  
by a flickering hurricane lantern swinging from the axle.  
A train-whistle away in the darkness;  
a chain of light — each link a nest of laughter  
and conversation. Watching it  
until it vanished into the night.  
And the cold rain was colder.

A mile further on, a light in a window  
back from the road a little way — an invitation  
to turn in, if one had an excuse.

But loneliness was not an excuse.

A shy boy in soaking oilskins  
could not add to the comfort of a comfortable farmer  
and his family before their log fire.

Better keep straight on than stop for the moment  
of a half-opened door and the stammered foolishness  
and the blush hotter than fire as the door closed again.

Rain. The first drops boring holes in the dust;  
then setting in, washing the heat from our eyes  
and the leaves of the trees; and the dry creek-bed  
suddenly surprised with a rush of water.

In summer when you yoked up after lunch  
the trace-chains burnt your fingers; in winter  
in the mornings they were coated with frost.  
But the earth softly, almost soundlessly  
turning over the mouldboards, its smell,  
the steam from the horses' nostrils; the hum  
of the harvester, and the rustle of pouring wheat:  
these were songs only requiring Man-words  
and melodies to give them form. And  
nectarines eaten at dawn from the tree,  
and black muscats at dusk from the vine  
unwashed with the bloom on them,  
and autumn yellow-box honey, were songs  
if there had been a singer.

The township was a sprawl of loneliness:  
eight houses without flowers to cover  
their nakedness; a bakery; a store  
that sent you an account six months after  
you'd paid it, hoping you hadn't kept the receipt;  
a butcher's shop — (the yarn went that Lumbly,  
the butcher, went into the store and said,  
'Mrs. Shalidone —'  
'Yes, Mr. Lumbly?'  
'Mrs. Shalidone, I reckon that Sam  
[her husband] oughto get the Victoria Cross.'  
'Why, Mr. Lumbly?'  
'For puttin' up for all these years  
with a bitch like you.' Mrs. Shalidone  
reached for a counter weight. Lumbly said,  
'You can throw it, if you like, Mrs. Shalidone,  
but I'll throw it back — and I can throw  
harder than you, Mrs. Shalidone.')

The store and the butcher's shop.  
The post office with more eyes than it needed  
to sort a few letters, and a tongue  
long enough to reach everyone's ears in the district;  
the pub wherè thirst and grouches were never  
quenched, and no dreams sprouted. But the bell  
of the blacksmith's anvil was a warmth  
in winter and a shade in summer.

Further away was the weekly stock market,  
some tree-lined streets, six pubs, a bishop  
and a hospital. (The yarn went round one year  
that at the hospital ball some of the lads  
had doped the claret-cup — and there was buckjumpin'  
all over the place till *Three O'Clock in the Morning.*)

Once a year the steam chaff-cutter came around;  
once a year the insurance inspector;  
the harness repairer; the magic-lantern show;  
and there was fresh gossip. And also came  
Indian hawkers from whom we bought cloth,  
needles and thread, soap and sundry trinkets;  
but had no talk with.

There were still swagmen  
on the roads at that time: men who carried  
their lives in pieces buried in their souls  
and who tried to catch the bird of the wind  
in their eyelashes. We had no talk with them either.  
We fed them to be rid of them. Cheaper  
than have a lamb go into their pot at night.  
So we said.

They, and the hawkers,  
finally disappeared over the horizon  
along with the old way of farming, after  
the tractors had made war on, and killed the horses,  
and the wireless threw the pianos out of the houses  
and the swimming-holes got drowned in the Olympic Pool.

We welcomed the 'boys' back from World War I  
with the songs they had marched to: *Tipperary,*  
*Keep the home-fires burning, There's a long, long trail,*  
*Pack up your troubles in your old kitbag;*  
and a new song with strange disturbing words:  
*How you gonna keep 'em down on the farm*  
*after they've seen Paree?*

But it was not so much the returned men  
who did not want to stay on the farms:  
it was we younger ones who had not seen  
the lights of Paris and London who felt  
the lights of our own city beckoning.

But first I went out West, into its silence  
and emptiness. And met the Wind  
which was looking for a Man-throat through which  
to sing a new Australian song to the Word.  
And I forgot the years that had been.  
They came back to me for the first time  
when I began this poem — and the Wind  
lovingly urged me to remember.

The city in which I found myself  
was not lit with the companionship of hope and adventure  
but with candles that had got lost  
and were weeping great white tears  
which ran down the cheeks of night; a city  
where the streets walked always to the same place where  
one was.

I wandered for years, for lifetimes, asking everyone,  
'Where are you going? What is there when you get there?  
How do you make what there is, yours to give to another?  
How do you arrive at the same beach, at the same moment  
of a wave, as another? or on the same hilltop  
at the instant of sunset?'

Then, one night, a door opened and I went inside  
and there was a piano making sounds  
like a fountain in a moonlit garden, like  
great hopes and terrible disasters, like  
the love that is buried in one's heart which one does  
not know.

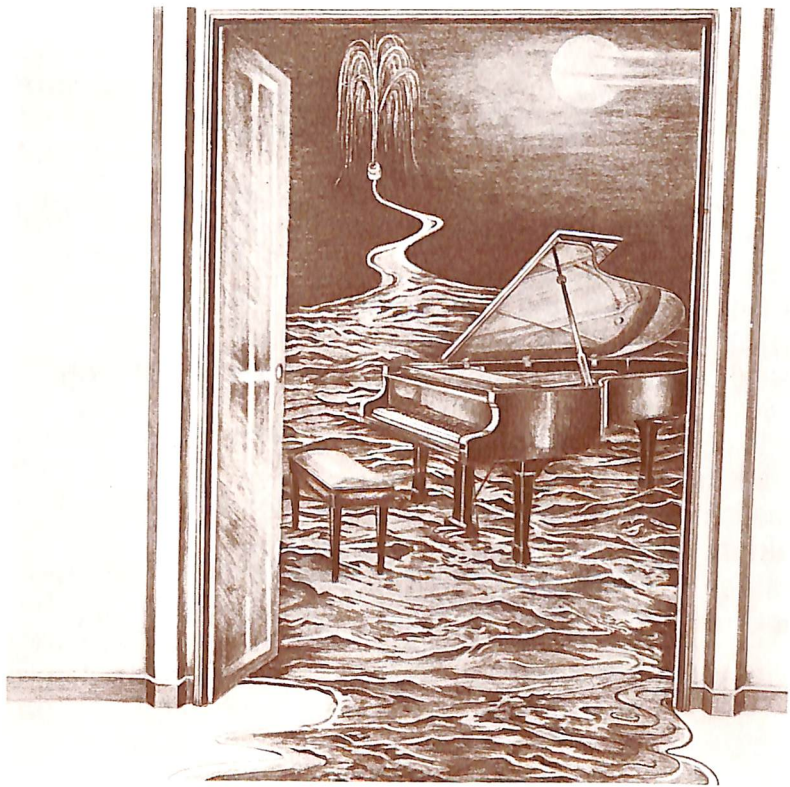
And I went on through other doors  
where dancers and poets and painters  
created new and beautiful dreams,  
and ancient stone told of the beginning of things,  
and books were as men were — noble and violent,  
full of wisdom and peace — and had songs to sing  
and stood up and sang them.

It was a city of people who talked,  
trying to say things to one another. Endless talk —  
until our voices became drifts of fog  
out of which the eyes of our brains tried to stare,  
and, failing, crept under the window into the street  
keeping close to the buildings, pausing  
and looking back like an alley-cat.

Talked

until sorrow descended upon us —  
comrades in mourning when the beer ran out.  
We were looking for the Word  
without first asking the Wind to inform us.  
The Wind has been with the Word since the beginning of  
things  
and knows the Word's whims. It cannot be denied.





Then the Depression came. And city men  
jumping the trains at night or camping out  
again saw the stars. The cry of distance.  
Every railway bridge was a net of yarns,  
and every train a loaded defiance.  
'We've had it good in the past — she'll come good again.'  
And back to the city. The 12 x 12 room  
on a back lane facing a blank wall.  
Beautiful wall! painted by Sassetta.  
Beautiful room! filled with fog of voices.  
Beautiful piano! sometimes a musician played you.

Then World Folly II overtook us, and  
the near Japanese invasion, and  
the real American invasion, and  
Hiroshima broke the sky into a million  
pieces for the bulldozers of progress  
to push over the edge of reason into black Space.

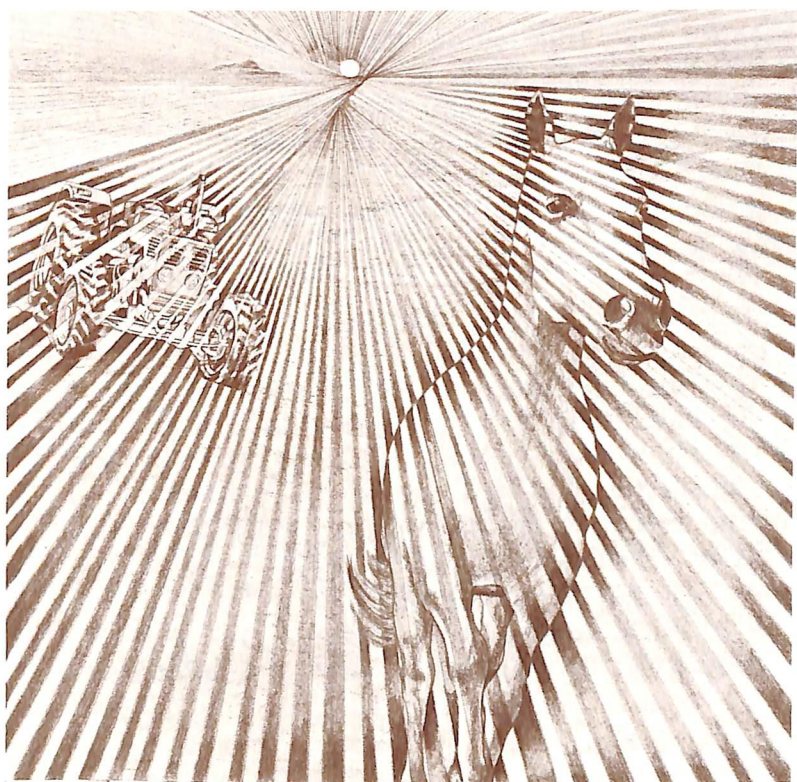
And began  
the Rule of the Atlantic Money-men.  
And began  
Australia's consciousness of nationhood.  
And began  
the Welfare State of the New Longevity.  
And was established the Age of the Machine.  
And was written  
the new Genesis: In the Beginning  
was Nobody, but in the end is god  
whose holy Name is Progress-ever-more.  
His great angels are the wise Computers,  
and his little angels are the happy  
Robots —  
for the Glory of the Power.

Standing on a hillside overlooking a forest,  
talking to a bulldozer driver. He said:  
I've got four hundred bucking horses here  
under this bonnet. There's nothin' I'd like better  
than to take them down into that timber  
and push it all over. Trees!  
what the bloody hell's the good of trees? —

The horse had to be replaced. History —  
the story of change. But there was love between  
man and horse: care and response, companionship.  
There is care and response between man and machine  
But a machine does not whinny when you approach it,  
nuzzle your shoulder when you pat it.  
Its exhaust does not manure the paddocks  
and make the grass and the wild flowers grow.  
The children cannot ride on its back, nor fondle its foal.  
It does not nibble sugar from your hand.  
It does not answer to its name.

It responds to care. But its response  
is because of law, not because of love.  
And the use of it tends to coarsen  
the fibres of a man's spirit and give him  
a wrong sense of power; cover  
his eyes from sap-surge and make him deaf  
to the music of small voices.

A golden moon rose out of the Pacific  
and turned to silver, and the banana leaves  
cast moving shadows on the ground.  
And the Wind, for the last time, spoke to me,  
plucking my ears infinitely tenderly. It said:



Neither the horse nor the tractor  
neither the buggy nor the motor-car  
neither the township nor the city  
neither the piano and fiddle nor the sophisticated band  
neither the oral yarn nor the written book matter.

*All that matters is the love  
with which one does what one does —  
the love and the song in one's words.*

It's been a long time since we first met:  
a long time in your time, a moment in mine —  
for I am more ancient than the forests  
and the rocks and the earth. It was I  
who sang in the stars on the First Morning  
and shouted in the shout of the sons of God.  
A long time, and a moment.

You have endured  
the years: the thoughts that rose up before you  
like bullets of quail which drop to the ground  
in a few yards; thoughts that streamed out from you  
like the headlights of a car on a mountain road,  
lighting the road only as far as the next bend  
and landscapes that will never be visited;  
thoughts that crawled as maggots of praise, spat  
as cats of justification; and thoughts  
as open as the plains, as solid  
as the hills, as rhythmic as water.  
All these you have endured. And the loneliness.

Go on enduring. For it is to endure  
that a man is born. To endure and endure  
until he is fit to endure the Face of the Word  
before which the suns are but festive lights at a Fair.

Neither the horse nor the tractor . . . But  
it has gone beyond this now. Men have created  
a monster which can devour them. —

The Wind paused, and then began to intone:  
And when the kingdom of Progress-ever-more  
is over all the earth, people will not be needed.  
The machine will design machines for  
machines to make and wheel out and cover  
the earth — for the beauty of it,  
for the pleasure of Progress-ever-more.  
And when the whole earth rejoices with scrap-metal  
and not one blade of grass can be seen,  
the Machine will order a shining road  
to be built to the moon, to Venus and Mars  
where Progress-ever-more will have weekend  
cottages!

The Wind laughed a great boisterous laugh  
which set the banana leaves swaying and rustling  
like Hula girls in the moonlight.

And said

quietly again: All things in creation  
give themselves to me as my instruments.  
All things except men. But never fear,  
my young, old friend. No matter  
what small god men set up and worship,  
eternal, beginningless Being continues to Be.

Endure. Remember that the only thing  
that matters is the love with which one does  
what one does, with which one says what one says.  
Endure. Endure till the Word of Creation  
breaks the seal on its long Silence,  
and I sing the new Song to the Word.  
Against that time, I ceaselessly seek throats  
that will give shape to my Song.

I am the Voice of God  
walking in the evening, calling,  
Adam, where are you?  
Why are you hiding from me? —  
Then it was only a matter of waiting for the Advent of  
the Word.

And He reached out across the separation that was between us  
and said: I am here where I am, and where you have put me. —  
And I asked: When, Beloved, will I meet you?  
And He said: In my time — which is the right time. —



Then one night I had a dream in which I was swimming in the sea and was carried out into deep water, where I sank. Down and down I went, until my feet rested on some solid object which moved to the shore; and I found myself sitting naked on the beach, weeping, and before me was the divine Beloved Himself, Meher Baba, smiling.



