

## THE SACRIFICE

*To J. F. C. Fuller*

**B**EYOND the temple's outermost zone,  
Bleeding, bound to the sacred stone,  
Blinking beneath the boiling sun,  
The captive stands, the Lonely One,  
So utterly silent and alone,  
He seems a runner whose race is done.

They cast the stones about his head;  
They smash his teeth; the stones grow red.  
His broken jaw droops on his breast,  
His right cheek-bone is inward prest;  
And utterly his blood is shed,  
That the gray ghost may manifest.

Despite himself he winces now,  
When flat upon his bloody brow  
A well-cast stone lands with a crash—  
And now his face grows like to ash,  
His breath grows short, while doth avow  
The caster, "that was my great smash."

His eyes are closed, his breath is done;  
He smiles upon the burning sun,  
    And then a stone puts out his eye.  
    Then with a shudder he doth die.  
They rush to seize his head; they run,  
    The ever-ready priest stands by.

He tears the poor head from its place,  
They gaze upon the battered face,  
    And she he loved with wondering stare  
    Looks at the crack beneath the hair;  
But the head smiles with wondering grace,  
    And now in death seems debonair.

How fiercely all the brown eyes gleam!  
They trace the course of each red stream;  
    They gaze upon him reverently,  
    The god who came for them to die.  
They slay their god, the fools, and dream  
    That they have won the solid sky!