

- 5 My country is Kiltartan Cross,²
 My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,
 No likely end could bring them loss
 Or leave them happier than before.
 Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,
 10 Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,
 A lonely impulse of delight
 Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
 I balanced all, brought all to mind,
 The years to come seemed waste of breath,
 15 A waste of breath the years behind
 In balance with this life, this death.

Easter 1916¹

- I have met them at close of day
 Coming with vivid faces
 From counter or desk among grey
 Eighteenth-century houses.
 5 I have passed with a nod of the head
 Or polite meaningless words,
 Or have lingered awhile and said
 Polite meaningless words,
 And thought before I had done
 10 Of a mocking tale or a gibe^o
 To please a companion
 Around the fire at the club,
 Being certain that they and I
 But lived where motley^o is worn:
 15 All changed, changed utterly:
 A terrible beauty is born.
 That woman's days were spent
 In ignorant good-will,
 Her nights in argument
 20 Until her voice grew shrill.²
 What voice more sweet than hers
 When, young and beautiful,
 She rode to harriers?^o
 This man³ had kept a school
 25 And rode our wingèd horse;
 This other⁴ his helper and friend
 Was coming into his force;
 He might have won fame in the end,
 So sensitive his nature seemed,

*taunt**jester's outfit**hunting dogs*

2. The crossroads in Kiltartan, near the Gregory estate at Coole Park.

1. The Irish Republic was declared on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916.

2. Countess Markiewicz, née Constance Gore-Booth, played a prominent part in the Easter Rising and was sen-

tenced to be executed; her sentence was later reduced to imprisonment.

3. Padraic Pearse.

4. Thomas MacDonagh, poet executed for his role in the rebellion.

30 So daring and sweet his thought.
 This other man⁵ I had dreamed
 A drunken, vainglorious lout.
 He had done most bitter wrong
 To some who are near my heart,
 35 Yet I number him in the song;
 He, too, has resigned his part
 In the casual comedy;
 He, too, has been changed in his turn,
 Transformed utterly:
 40 A terrible beauty is born.

 Hearts with one purpose alone
 Through summer and winter seem
 Enchanted to a stone
 To trouble the living stream.
 45 The horse that comes from the road,
 The rider, the birds that range
 From cloud to tumbling cloud,
 Minute by minute they change;
 A shadow of cloud on the stream
 50 Changes minute by minute;
 A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
 And a horse plashes within it;
 The long-legged moor-hens dive,
 And hens to moor-cocks call;
 55 Minute by minute they live:
 The stone's in the midst of all.

 Too long a sacrifice
 Can make a stone of the heart.
 O when may it suffice?
 60 That is Heaven's part, our part
 To murmur name upon name,
 As a mother names her child
 When sleep at last has come
 On limbs that had run wild.
 65 What is it but nightfall?
 No, no, not night but death;
 Was it needless death after all?
 For England may keep faith
 For all that is done and said.
 70 We know their dream; enough
 To know they dreamed and are dead;
 And what if excess of love
 Bewildered them till they died?
 I write it out in a verse—
 75 MacDonagh and MacBride

5. Major John MacBride, briefly married to Maud Gonne, was also executed.

And Connolly⁶ and Pearse
 Now and in time to be,
 Wherever green is worn,
 Are changed, changed utterly:
 80 A terrible beauty is born.
 1916

1916

The Second Coming¹

Turning and turning in the widening gyre[°]
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 5 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity.

 Surely some revelation is at hand;
 10 Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
 The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
 When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*²
 Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
 A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
 15 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
 Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
 Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
 The darkness drops again; but now I know
 That twenty centuries[°] of stony sleep
 20 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

*circle or spiral**the Christian era*

1919

1921

A Prayer for My Daughter¹

Once more the storm is howling, and half hid
 Under this cradle-hood and coverlid
 My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle
 But Gregory's wood and one bare hill
 5 Whereby the haystack- and roof-levelling wind,
 Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed;
 And for an hour I have walked and prayed
 Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

 I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour
 10 And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower,
 And under the arches of the bridge, and scream

6. James Connolly, Marxist commander-in-chief of the Easter rebels; also executed.

1. Traditionally, the return of Christ to earth on Judgment Day.

2. A storehouse of images and symbols common to all humankind; similar to Carl Jung's notion of the collective unconscious.

1. Anne Butler Yeats was born 26 February 1919.

To leave some monument behind,
Nor thought of the levelling wind.

Come let us mock at the wise;
With all those calendars whereon
100 They fixed old aching eyes,
They never saw how seasons run,
And now but gape at the sun.

Come let us mock at the good
That fancied goodness might be gay,
105 And sick of solitude
Might proclaim a holiday:
Wind shrieked—and where are they?

Mock mockers after that
That would not lift a hand maybe
110 To help good, wise or great
To bar that foul storm out, for we
Traffic in mockery.

6

Violence upon the roads: violence of horses;
Some few have handsome riders, are garlanded
115 On delicate sensitive ear or tossing mane,
But wearied running round and round in their courses
All break and vanish, and evil gathers head:

Herodias' daughters have returned again,⁵
A sudden blast of dusty wind and after
120 Thunder of feet, tumult of images,
Their purpose in the labyrinth of the wind;
And should some crazy hand dare touch a daughter
All turn with amorous cries, or angry cries,
According to the wind, for all are blind.
125 But now wind drops, dust settles; thereupon
There lurches past, his great eyes without thought
Under the shadow of stupid straw-pale locks,
That insolent fiend Robert Artisson⁶
To whom the love-lorn Lady Kyteler brought
130 Bronzed peacock feathers, red combs of her cocks.

1919

Leda and the Swan¹

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed

5. Herodias told her daughter Salome to ask Herod for the head of John the Baptist on a platter (Matthew 14.8).
6. An evil spirit much run after in Kilkenny at the start of the fourteenth century [Yeats's note]. He was said to have seduced Dame Alice Kyteler, who poisoned her husbands

and was accused of sacrificing cocks and peacocks to him.
1. In Greek mythology, Zeus came to Leda in the form of a swan and raped her; Helen of Troy and Clytemnestra were their offspring.

By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
 He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.
 5 How can those terrified vague fingers push
 The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
 And how can body, laid in that white rush,
 But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?
 A shudder in the loins engenders there
 10 The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
 And Agamemnon² dead.
 Being so caught up,
 So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
 Did she put on his knowledge with his power
 Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

1923

1924

Among School Children

1
 I walk through the long schoolroom questioning;¹
 A kind old nun in a white hood replies;
 The children learn to cipher and to sing,
 To study reading-books and history,
 5 To cut and sew, be neat in everything
 In the best modern way—the children's eyes
 In momentary wonder stare upon
 A sixty-year-old smiling public man.

2
 I dream of a Ledaean² body, bent
 10 Above a sinking fire, a tale that she
 Told of a harsh reproof, or trivial event
 That changed some childish day to tragedy—
 Told, and it seemed that our two natures blent
 Into a sphere from youthful sympathy,
 15 Or else, to alter Plato's parable,
 Into the yolk and white of the one shell.³

3
 And thinking of that fit of grief or rage
 I look upon one child or t'other there
 And wonder if she stood so at that age—
 20 For even daughters of the swan can share
 Something of every paddler's heritage—

2. Brother of Menelaus, husband of Helen. When she was abducted by Paris, Agamemnon fought to rescue her. He was murdered by his wife Clytemnestra on his return home.

1. While an Irish senator, Yeats visited St. Otteran's School in Waterford.

2. Of Leda, the mother of Helen of Troy (or Helen herself).

3. According to Plato's parable in the *Symposium*, male and female were once the two halves of a single body; it was subsequently cut in half like a hard-boiled egg.

And had that colour upon cheek or hair,
 And thereupon my heart is driven wild:
 She stands before me as a living child.

4

25 Her present image floats into the mind—
 Did Quattrocento⁴ finger fashion it
 Hollow of cheek as though it drank the wind
 And took a mess of shadows for its meat?
 And I though never of Ledaean kind
 30 Had pretty plumage once—enough of that,
 Better to smile on all that smile, and show
 There is a comfortable kind of old scarecrow.

5

What youthful mother, a shape upon her lap
 Honey of generation had betrayed,
 35 And that must sleep, shriek, struggle to escape
 As recollection or the drug decide,
 Would think her son, did she but see that shape
 With sixty or more winters on its head,
 A compensation for the pang of his birth,
 40 Or the uncertainty of his setting forth?

6

Plato thought nature but a spume^o that plays
 Upon a ghostly paradigm of things;
 Solider Aristotle played the taws⁵
 Upon the bottom of a king of kings;
 45 World-famous golden-thighed Pythagoras⁶
 Fingered upon a fiddle-stick or strings
 What a star sang and careless Muses heard:
 Old clothes upon old sticks to scare a bird.

froth

7

Both nuns and mothers worship images,
 50 But those the candles light are not as those
 That animate a mother's reveries,
 But keep a marble or a bronze repose.
 And yet they too break hearts—O Presences
 That passion, piety or affection knows,
 55 And that all heavenly glory symbolise—
 O self-born mockers of man's enterprise;

8

Labour is blossoming or dancing where
 The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,

4. Fifteenth-century artists of Italy's Renaissance.

5. A leather strap, used to spin a top.

6. A 6th-century B.C. Greek philosopher who developed a mathematical basis for the universe and music.

60 Nor beauty born out of its own despair,
 Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil.
 O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer,
 Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
 O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
 How can we know the dancer from the dance?

1927

1926

Byzantium

The unpurged images of day recede;
 The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
 Night resonance recedes, night-walkers' song
 After great cathedral gong;
 5 A starlit or a moonlit dome disdains
 All that man is,
 All mere complexities,
 The fury and the mire of human veins.
 Before me floats an image, man or shade,
 10 Shade more than man, more image than a shade;
 For Hades' bobbin^o bound in mummy-cloth
 May unwind the winding path;
 A mouth that has no moisture and no breath
 Breathless mouths may summon;
 15 I hail the superhuman;
 I call it death-in-life and life-in-death.

spool

Miracle, bird or golden handiwork,
 More miracle than bird or handiwork,
 Planted on the starlit golden bough,
 20 Can like the cocks of Hades crow,
 Or, by the moon embittered, scorn aloud
 In glory of changeless metal
 Common bird or petal
 And all complexities of mire or blood.

25 At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit
 Flames that no faggot^o feeds, nor steel has lit,
 Nor storm disturbs, flames begotten of flame,
 Where blood-begotten spirits come
 And all complexities of fury leave,
 30 Dying into a dance,
 An agony of trance,
 An agony of flame that cannot singe a sleeve.

bundle of sticks

35 Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood,
 Spirit after spirit! The smithies break the flood,
 The golden smithies of the Emperor!
 Marbles of the dancing floor
 Break bitter furies of complexity,
 Those images that yet

froth