

TO THE ROSE UPON THE ROOD OF TIME

Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days!  
Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways:  
Cuchulain battling with the bitter tide;  
The Druid, grey, wood-nurtured, quiet eyed,  
Who cast round Fergus dreams, and ruin untold; 5  
And thine own sadness, whereof stars, grown old  
In dancing silver-sandalled on the sea,  
Sing in their high and lonely melody.  
Come near, that no more blinded by man's fate,  
I find under the boughs of love and hate, 10  
In all poor foolish things that live a day,  
Eternal beauty wandering on her way.

Come near, come near, come near -- Ah, leave me still  
A little space for the rose-breath to fill!  
Lest I no more hear common things that crave; 15  
The weak worm hiding down in its small cave,  
The field-mouse running by me in the grass,  
And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass;  
But seek alone to hear the strange things said  
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead, 20  
And learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know  
Come near; I would, before my time to go,  
Sing of old Eire and the ancient ways:  
Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days.

1892

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.  
And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow, 5  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings.  
I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore; 10  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

1888

SEPTEMBER 1913

What need you, being come to sense,  
But fumble in a greasy till  
And add the halfpence to the pence  
And prayer to shivering prayer, until  
You have dried the marrow from the bone; 5  
For men were born to pray and save:  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet they were of a different kind,  
The names that stilled your childish play, 10  
They have gone about the world like wind,  
But little time had they to pray  
For whom the hangman's rope was spun,  
And what, God help us, could they save?  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, 15  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Was it for this the wild geese spread  
The grey wing upon every tide;  
For this that all that blood was shed,  
For this Edward Fitzgerald died, 20  
And Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone,  
All that delirium of the brave?  
Romantic Ireland's dead and gone,  
It's with O'Leary in the grave.

Yet could we turn the years again, 25  
And call those exiles as they were  
In all their loneliness and pain,  
You'd cry, 'Some woman's yellow hair  
Has maddened every mother's son':  
They weighed so lightly what they gave. 30  
But let them be, they're dead and gone,  
They're with O'Leary in the grave.

1913

THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

The trees are in their autumn beauty,  
The woodland paths are dry,  
Under the October twilight the water  
Mirrors a still sky;  
Upon the brimming water among the stones 5  
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me  
Since I first made my count;  
I saw, before I had well finished,  
All suddenly mount 10  
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings  
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,  
And now my heart is sore.  
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight, 15  
The first time on this shore,  
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,  
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,  
They paddle in the cold 20  
Companionable streams or climb the air;  
Their hearts have not grown old;  
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,  
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water, 25  
Mysterious, beautiful;  
Among what rushes will they build,  
By what lake's edge or pool  
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day  
To find they have flown away? 30

1917

## EASTER 1916

I have met them at close of day  
 Coming with vivid faces  
 From counter or desk among grey  
 Eighteenth-century houses.  
 I have passed with a nod of the head           5  
 Or polite meaningless words,  
 Or have lingered awhile and said  
 Polite meaningless words,  
 And thought before I had done  
 Of a mocking tale or a gibe           10  
 To please a companion  
 Around the fire at the club,  
 Being certain that they and I  
 But lived where motley is worn:  
 All changed, changed utterly:           15  
 A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent  
 In ignorant good-will,  
 Her nights in argument  
 Until her voice grew shrill.           20  
 What voice more sweet than hers  
 When, young and beautiful,  
 She rode to harriers?  
 This man had kept a school  
 And rode our wingèd horse;           25  
 This other his helper and friend  
 Was coming into his force;  
 He might have won fame in the end,  
 So sensitive his nature seemed,  
 So daring and sweet his thought.           30  
 This other man I had dreamed  
 A drunken, vainglorious lout.  
 He had done most bitter wrong  
 To some who are near my heart,  
 Yet I number him in the song;           35  
 He, too, has resigned his part  
 In the casual comedy;  
 He, too, has been changed in his turn,  
 Transformed utterly:  
 A terrible beauty is born.           40

*continued*

EASTER 1916 (Continued)

Hearts with one purpose alone  
Through summer and winter seem  
Enchanted to a stone  
To trouble the living stream.  
The horse that comes from the road, 45  
The rider, the birds that range  
From cloud to tumbling cloud,  
Minute by minute they change;  
A shadow of cloud on the stream  
Changes minute by minute; 50  
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;  
Minute by minute they live: 55  
The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice  
Can make a stone of the heart.  
O when may it suffice?  
That is Heaven's part, our part 60  
To murmur name upon name,  
As a mother names her child  
When sleep at last has come  
On limbs that had run wild.  
What is it but nightfall? 65  
No, no, not night but death;  
Was it needless death after all?  
For England may keep faith  
For all that is done and said.  
We know their dream; enough 70  
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—  
MacDonagh and MacBride 75  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
Wherever green is worn,  
Are changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born. 80

## THE SECOND COMING

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,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere 5  
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;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand. 10  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun, 15  
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  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle, 20  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

1919

## A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

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  
 Whereby the haystack and roof-levelling wind, 5  
 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,  
 And heard the sea-wind scream upon the tower, 10  
 And under the arches of the bridge, and scream  
 In the elms above the flooded stream;  
 Imagining in excited reverie  
 That the future years had come  
 Dancing to a frenzied drum 15  
 Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

May she be granted beauty, and yet not  
 Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught,  
 Or hers before a looking-glass; for such,  
 Being made beautiful overmuch, 20  
 Consider beauty a sufficient end,  
 Lose natural kindness, and maybe  
 The heart-revealing intimacy  
 That chooses right, and never find a friend.

Helen, being chosen, found life flat and dull, 25  
 And later had much trouble from a fool;  
 While that great Queen that rose out of the spray,  
 Being fatherless, could have her way,  
 Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.  
 It's certain that fine women eat 30  
 A crazy salad with their meat  
 Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;  
 Hearts are not had as a gift, but hearts are earned  
 By those that are not entirely beautiful. 35  
 Yet many, that have played the fool  
 For beauty's very self, has charm made wise;  
 And many a poor man that has roved,  
 Loved and thought himself beloved,  
 From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes. 40

*continued*

A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER (Continued)

May she become a flourishing hidden tree,  
That all her thoughts may like the linnet be,  
And have no business but dispensing round  
Their magnanimities of sound;  
Nor but in merriment begin a chase, 45  
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.  
Oh, may she live like some green laurel  
Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved,  
The sort of beauty that I have approved, 50  
Prosper but little, has dried up of late,  
Yet knows that to be choked with hate  
May well be of all evil chances chief.  
If there's no hatred in a mind  
Assault and battery of the wind 55  
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst,  
So let her think opinions are accursed.  
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born  
Out of the mouth of Plenty's horn, 60  
Because of her opinionated mind  
Barter that horn and every good  
By quiet natures understood  
For an old bellows full of angry wind?

Considering that, all hatred driven hence, 65  
The soul recovers radical innocence  
And learns at last that it is self-delighting,  
Self-appeasing, self-affrighting,  
And that its own sweet will is heaven's will,  
She can, though every face should scowl 70  
And every windy quarter howl  
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house  
Where all's accustomed, ceremonious;  
For arrogance and hatred are the wares 75  
Peddled in the thoroughfares.  
How but in custom and in ceremony  
Are innocence and beauty born?  
Ceremony's a name for the rich horn,  
And custom for the spreading laurel tree. 80

SAILING TO BYZANTIUM

I

That is no country for old men. The young  
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,  
—Those dying generations—at their song,  
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,  
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long 5  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.  
Caught in that sensual music all neglect  
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,  
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless 10  
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing  
For every tatter in its mortal dress,  
Nor is there singing school but studying  
Monuments of its own magnificence;  
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come 15  
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire  
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,  
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,  
And be the singing-masters of my soul. 20  
Consume my heart away; sick with desire  
And fastened to a dying animal  
It knows not what it is; and gather me  
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take 25  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make  
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;  
Or set upon a golden bough to sing 30  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN

I

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

II

I dream of a Ledaean body, bent  
Above a sinking fire, a tale that she 10  
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,  
Or else, to alter Plato's parable, 15  
Into the yolk and white of the one shell.

III

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—  
For even daughters of the swan can share 20  
Something of every paddler's heritage—  
And had that colour upon cheek or hair,  
And thereupon my heart is driven wild:  
She stands before me as a living child.

IV

Her present image floats into the mind— 25  
Did Quattrocento 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  
Had pretty plumage once—enough of that, 30  
Better to smile on all that smile, and show  
There is a comfortable kind of old scarecrow.

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AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN (Continued)

V

What youthful mother, a shape upon her lap  
Honey of generation had betrayed,  
And that must sleep, shriek, struggle to escape 35  
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,  
Or the uncertainty of his setting forth? 40

VI

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

VII

Both nuns and mothers worship images,  
But those the candles light are not as those 50  
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,  
And that all heavenly glory symbolise— 55  
O self-born mockers of man's enterprise;

VIII

Labour is blossoming or dancing where  
The body is not bruised to pleasure soul,  
Nor beauty born out of its own despair,  
Nor blear-eyed wisdom out of midnight oil. 60  
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?