

# WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

(Irish, 1865–1939)

## “The Man Who Dreamed of Faeryland”

He stood among a crowd at Dromahair;  
His heart hung all upon a silken dress,  
And he had known at last some tenderness,  
Before earth took him to her stony care;  
But when a man poured fish into a pile,  
It seemed they raised their little silver heads,  
And sang what gold morning or evening sheds  
Upon a woven world-forgotten isle  
Where people love beside the ravelled seas;  
That Time can never mar a lover's vows  
Under that woven changeless roof of boughs:  
The singing shook him out of his new ease.

He wandered by the sands of Lissadell;  
His mind ran all on money cares and fears,  
And he had known at last some prudent years  
Before they heaped his grave under the hill;  
But while he passed before a plashy place,  
A lug-worm with its grey and muddy mouth  
Sang that somewhere to north or west or south  
There dwelt a gay, exulting, gentle race  
Under the golden or the silver skies;  
That if a dancer stayed his hungry foot  
It seemed the sun and moon were in the fruit:  
And at that singing he was no more wise.

He mused beside the well of Scanavin,  
He mused upon his mockers: without fail  
His sudden vengeance were a country tale,  
When earthy night had drunk his body in;  
But one small knot-grass growing by the pool  
Sang where—unnecessary cruel voice—  
Old silence bids its chosen race rejoice,  
Whatever ravelled waters rise and fall  
Or stormy silver fret the gold of day,  
And midnight there enfold them like a fleece  
And lover there by lover be at peace.

(continued)

The tale drove his fine angry mood away.  
He slept under the hill of Lugnagall;  
And might have known at last unhaunted sleep  
Under that cold and vapour-turbaned steep,

Now that the earth had taken man and all:  
Did not the worms that spired about his bones  
Proclaim with that unwearied, reedy cry  
That God has laid His fingers on the sky,  
That from those fingers glittering summer runs  
Upon the dancer by the dreamless wave.  
Why should those lovers that no lovers miss  
Dream, until God burn Nature with a kiss?  
The man has found no comfort in the grave.

1891

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“The Folly of Being Comforted”

One that is ever kind said yesterday:  
“Your well-belovèd’s hair has threads of grey,  
And little shadows come about her eyes;  
Time can but make it easier to be wise  
Though now it seems impossible, and so  
All that you need is patience.”

Heart cries, “No,  
I have not a crumb of comfort, not a grain.  
Time can but make her beauty over again:  
Because of that great nobleness of hers  
The fire that stirs about her, when she stirs,  
Burns but more clearly, O she had not these ways  
When all the wild summer was in her gaze.”

O heart! O heart! If she’d but turn her head,  
You’d know the folly of being comforted.

1902

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“Adam’s Curse”

We sat together at one summer’s end,  
That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,  
And you and I, and talked of poetry.  
I said: “A line will take us hours maybe;  
Yet if it does not seem a moment’s thought,  
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.  
Better go down upon your marrowbones  
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones  
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;  
For to articulate sweet sounds together  
Is to work harder than all these, and yet  
Be thought an idler by the noisy set  
Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen  
The martyrs call the world.”

And thereupon  
That beautiful mild woman for whose sake  
There’s many a one shall find out all heartache  
On finding that her voice is sweet and low  
Replied: “To be born woman is to know—  
Although they do not talk of it at school—  
That we must labor to be beautiful.”

I said: “It’s certain there is no fine thing  
Since Adam’s fall but needs much laboring.  
There have been lovers who thought love should be  
So much compounded of high courtesy  
That they would sigh and quote with learned looks  
Precedents out of beautiful old books;  
Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.”

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;  
We saw the last embers of daylight die,  
And in the trembling blue-green of the sky  
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell  
Washed by time’s waters as they rose and fell

(continued)

About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:  
That you were beautiful, and that I strove  
To love you in the old high way of love;  
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown  
As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

1902

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“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;  
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,  
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,  
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,  
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,  
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.  
But let them be, they’re dead and gone,  
They’re with O’Leary in the grave.

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“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  
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  
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:  
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent  
In ignorant good-will,  
Her nights in argument  
Until her voice grew shrill.  
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;  
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.  
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;  
He, too, has resigned his part

(continued)

In the casual comedy;  
He, too, has been changed in his turn,  
Transformed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.

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,  
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;  
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:  
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  
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?  
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  
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 (continued)

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

1916

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“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,  
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,  
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,  
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,  
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  
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  
A crazy salad with their meat  
Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

In courtesy I'd have her chiefly learned;

(continued)

Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts are earned  
By those that are not entirely beautiful;  
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.

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,  
Nor but in merriment a quarrel.  
O 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,  
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  
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,  
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,  
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 (continued)

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  
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.

1919

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“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  
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.  
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,  
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,  
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

1919

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen”

I

Many ingenious lovely things are gone  
That seemed sheer miracle to the multitude,  
Protected from the circle of the moon  
That pitches common things about. There stood  
Amid the ornamental bronze and stone  
An ancient image made of olive wood—  
And gone are Phidias’ famous ivories  
And all the golden grasshoppers and bees.

We too had many pretty toys when young:  
A law indifferent to blame or praise,  
To bribe or threat; habits that made old wrong  
Melt down, as it were wax in the sun’s rays;  
Public opinion ripening for so long  
We thought it would outlive all future days.  
O what fine thought we had because we thought  
That the worst rogues and rascals had died out.

All teeth were drawn, all ancient tricks unlearned,  
And a great army but a showy thing;  
What matter that no cannon had been turned  
Into a ploughshare? Parliament and king  
Thought that unless a little powder burned  
The trumpeters might burst with trumpeting  
And yet it lack all glory; and perchance  
The guardsmen’s drowsy chargers would not prance.

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare  
Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery  
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,  
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;  
The night can sweat with terror as before  
We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,  
And planned to bring the world under a rule,  
Who are but weasels fighting in a hole.

(continued)

He who can read the signs nor sink unmanned  
Into the half-deceit of some intoxicant  
From shallow wits; who knows no work can stand,  
Whether health, wealth or peace of mind were spent  
On master-work of intellect or hand,  
No honour leave its mighty monument,  
Has but one comfort left: all triumph would  
But break upon his ghostly solitude.

But is there any comfort to be found?  
Man is in love and loves what vanishes,  
What more is there to say? That country round  
None dared admit, if such a thought were his,  
Incendiary or bigot could be found  
To burn that stump on the Acropolis,  
Or break in bits the famous ivories  
Or traffic in the grasshoppers or bees.

## II

When Loie Fuller's Chinese dancers enwound  
A shining web, a floating ribbon of cloth,  
It seemed that a dragon of air  
Had fallen among dancers, had whirled them round  
Or hurried them off on its own furious path;  
So the Platonic Year  
Whirls out new right and wrong,  
Whirls in the old instead;  
All men are dancers and their tread  
Goes to the barbarous clangour of a gong.

## III

Some moralist or mythological poet  
Compares the solitary soul to a swan;  
I am satisfied with that,  
Satisfied if a troubled mirror show it,  
Before that brief gleam of its life be gone,  
An image of its state;  
The wings half spread for flight,  
The breast thrust out in pride

(continued)

Whether to play, or to ride  
Those winds that clamour of approaching night.  
A man in his own secret meditation  
Is lost amid the labyrinth that he has made  
In art or politics;  
Some Platonist affirms that in the station  
Where we should cast off body and trade  
The ancient habit sticks,  
And that if our works could  
But vanish with our breath  
That were a lucky death,  
For triumph can but mar our solitude.

The swan has leaped into the desolate heaven:  
That image can bring wildness, bring a rage  
To end all things, to end  
What my laborious life imagined, even  
The half-imagined, the half-written page;  
O but we dreamed to mend  
Whatever mischief seemed  
To afflict mankind, but now  
That winds of winter blow  
Learn that we were crack-pated when we dreamed.

#### IV

We, who seven years ago  
Talked of honour and of truth,  
Shriek with pleasure if we show  
The weasel's twist, the weasel's tooth.

#### V

Come let us mock at the great  
That had such burdens on the mind  
And toiled so hard and late  
To leave some monument behind,  
Nor thought of the levelling wind.

Come let us mock at the wise;  
With all those calendars whereon

(continued)

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,  
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  
To help good, wise or great  
To bar that foul storm out, for we  
Traffic in mockery.

## VI

Violence upon the roads: violence of horses;  
Some few have handsome riders, are garlanded  
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,  
A sudden blast of dusty wind and after  
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.  
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 Artisson  
To whom the love-lorn Lady Kyteler brought  
Bronzed peacock feathers, red combs of her cocks.

## **WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**

(Irish, 1865–1939)

### **“Leda and the Swan”**

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

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  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
And Agamemnon 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?

1924

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“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  
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 Ledeian body, bent  
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,  
Or else, to alter Plato’s parable,  
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  
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—  
Did Quattrocento finger fashion it

(continued)

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,  
Better to smile on all that smile, and show  
There is a comfortable kind of old scarecrow.

V

What youthful mother, a shape upon her lap  
Honey of generation had betrayed,  
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,  
Or the uncertainty of his setting forth?

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  
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  
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—  
O self-born mockers of man's enterprise;

(continued)

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.  
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?

1926

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“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  
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  
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  
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.  
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  
My bodily form from any natural thing,  
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make (continued)

Of hammered gold and gold enamelling  
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;  
Or set upon a golden bough to sing  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

1926

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“Crazy Jane Talks With the Bishop”

I met the Bishop on the road  
And much said he and I.  
“Those breasts are flat and fallen now,  
Those veins must soon be dry;  
Live in a heavenly mansion,  
Not in some foul sty.”

“Fair and foul are near of kin,  
And fair needs foul,” I cried.  
“My friends are gone, but that’s a truth  
Nor grave nor bed denied,  
Learned in bodily lowliness  
And in the heart’s pride.

“A woman can be proud and stiff  
When on love intent;  
But Love has pitched his mansion in  
The place of excrement;  
For nothing can be sole or whole  
That has not been rent.”

1933

# WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

(Irish, 1865–1939)

## “Lapis Lazuli”

I have heard that hysterical women say  
They are sick of the palette and the fiddle-bow,  
Of poets that are always gay,  
For everybody knows or else should know  
That if nothing drastic is done  
Aeroplane and Zeppelin will come out,  
Pitch like King Billy bomb-balls in  
Until the town lie beaten flat.

All perform their tragic play,  
There struts Hamlet, there is Lear,  
That's Ophelia, that Cordelia;  
Yet they, should the last scene be there,  
The great stage curtain about to drop,  
If worthy their prominent part in the play,  
Do not break up their lines to weep.  
They know that Hamlet and Lear are gay;  
Gaiety transfiguring all that dread.  
All men have aimed at, found and lost;  
Black out; Heaven blazing into the head:  
Tragedy wrought to its uttermost.  
Though Hamlet rambles and Lear rages,  
And all the drop-scenes drop at once  
Upon a hundred thousand stages,  
It cannot grow by an inch or an ounce.

On their own feet they came, or on shipboard,  
Camel-back, horse-back, ass-back, mule-back,  
Old civilizations put to the sword.  
Then they and their wisdom went to rack:  
No handiwork of Callimachus,  
Who handled marble as if it were bronze,  
Made draperies that seemed to rise  
When sea-wind swept the corner, stands;  
His long lamp-chimney shaped like the stem  
Of a slender palm, stood but a day;  
All things fall and are built again,

(continued)

And those that build them again are gay.  
Two Chinamen, behind them a third,  
Are carved in lapis lazuli,  
Over them flies a long-legged bird,  
A symbol of longevity;  
The third, doubtless a serving-man,  
Carries a musical instrument.

Every discoloration of the stone,  
Every accidental crack or dent,  
Seems a water-course or an avalanche,  
Or lofty slope where it still snows  
Though doubtless plum or cherry-branch  
Sweetens the little half-way house  
Those Chinamen climb towards, and I  
Delight to imagine them seated there;  
There, on the mountain and the sky,  
On all the tragic scene they stare.  
One asks for mournful melodies;  
Accomplished fingers begin to play.  
Their eyes mid many wrinkles, their eyes,  
Their ancient, glittering eyes, are gay.

1936

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**  
(Irish, 1865–1939)

“The Circus Animals’ Desertion”

I

I sought a theme and sought for it in vain,  
I sought it daily for six weeks or so.  
Maybe at last, being but a broken man,  
I must be satisfied with my heart, although  
Winter and summer till old age began  
My circus animals were all on show,  
Those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,  
Lion and woman and the Lord knows what.

II

What can I but enumerate old themes?  
First that sea-rider Oisín led by the nose  
Through three enchanted islands, allegorical dreams,  
Vain gaiety, vain battle, vain repose,  
Themes of the embittered heart, or so it seems,  
That might adorn old songs or courtly shows;  
But what cared I that set him on to ride,  
I, starved for the bosom of his faery bride?

And then a counter-truth filled out its play,  
*The Countess Cathleen* was the name I gave it;  
She, pity-crazed, had given her soul away,  
But masterful Heaven had intervened to save it.  
I thought my dear must her own soul destroy,  
So did fanaticism and hate enslave it,  
And this brought forth a dream and soon enough  
This dream itself had all my thought and love.

And when the Fool and Blind Man stole the bread  
Cúchulain fought the ungovernable sea;  
Heart-mysteries there, and yet when all is said  
It was the dream itself enchanted me:  
Character isolated by a deed  
To engross the present and dominate memory.

(continued)

III

Players and painted stage took all my love,  
And not those things that they were emblems of.  
Those masterful images because complete  
Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?  
A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,  
Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,  
Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut  
Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,  
I must lie down where all the ladders start,  
In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart.

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