

THE COLLECTED POEMS OF
W. B. YEATS

REVISED SECOND EDITION

Edited by
Richard J. Finneran

SCRIBNER PAPERBACK POETRY



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368 John Kinsella's Lament for Mrs. Mary Moore

I

A bloody and a sudden end,
 Gunshot or a noose,
 For death who takes what man would keep,
 Leaves what man would lose.
 He might have had my sister
 My cousins by the score,
 But nothing satisfied the fool
 But my dear Mary Moore,
 None other knows what pleasures man
 At table or in bed.
 What shall I do for pretty girls
 Now my old bawd is dead?

II

Though swift to strike a bargain
 Like an old Jew man,
 Her bargain struck we laughed and talked
 And emptied many a can;
 And O! but she had stories
 Though not for the priest's ear,
 To keep the soul of man alive
 Banish age and care,
 And being old she put a skin
 On everything she said.
 What shall I do for pretty girls
 Now my old bawd is dead?

III

The priests have got a book that says
 But for Adam's sin

Eden's garden would be there
 And I there within.
 No expectation fails there
 No pleasing habit ends
 No man grows old, no girl grows cold,
 But friends walk by friends.
 Who quarrels over halfpennies
 That plucks the trees for bread.
 What shall I do for pretty girls
 Now my old bawd is dead?

30

369 High Talk

Processions that lack high stilts have nothing that catches the eye.

What if my great-granddad had a pair that were twenty foot high,
 And mine were but fifteen foot, no modern stalks upon higher,
 Some rogue of the world stole them to patch up a fence or a fire.

Because piebald ponies, led bears, caged lions, make but poor shows,

Because children demand Daddy-long-legs upon his timber toes,

Because women in the upper stories demand a face at the pane
 That patching old heels they may shriek, I take to chisel and plane.

Malachi Stilt-Jack am I, whatever I learned has run wild,
 From collar to collar, from stilt to stilt, from father to child. 10

All metaphor, Malachi, stilts and all. A barnacle goose
 Far up in the stretches of night; night splits and the dawn
 breaks loose;

I, through the terrible novelty of light, stalk on, stalk on;
 Those great sea-horses bare their teeth and laugh at the dawn.

I sigh that kiss you,
For I must own
That I shall miss you
When you have grown.

10

26 *The Pity of Love*

A pity beyond all telling
Is hid in the heart of love:
The folk who are buying and selling,
The clouds on their journey above,
The cold wet winds ever blowing,
And the shadowy hazel grove
Where mouse-grey waters are flowing,
Threaten the head that I love.

27 *The Sorrow of Love*

The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,
The brilliant moon and all the milky sky,
And all that famous harmony of leaves,
Had blotted out man's image and his cry.

A girl arose that had red mournful lips
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,
Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

Arose, and on the instant clamorous eaves,
A climbing moon upon an empty sky,
And all that lamentation of the leaves,
Could but compose man's image and his cry.

10

28 *When You are Old*

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

10

29 *The White Birds*

I would that we were, my beloved, white birds on the foam
of the sea!

We tire of the flame of the meteor, before it can fade and flee;
And the flame of the blue star of twilight, hung low on the rim
of the sky,

Has awaked in our hearts, my beloved, a sadness that may not
die.

A weariness comes from those dreamers, dew-dabbled, the lily
and rose;

Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the flame of the meteor
that goes,

Or the flame of the blue star that lingers hung low in the fall
of the dew:

Or I would we were changed to white birds on the wandering
foam: I and you!

*And winds and ponds cover more quiet woods,
More shining winds, more star-glimmering ponds?
Is Eden out of time and out of space?
And do you gather about us when pale light
Shining on water and fallen among leaves,
And winds blowing from flowers, and whirr of feathers?
And the green quiet, have uplifted the heart?*

*I have made this poem for you, that men may read it
Before they read of Forgael and Dectora,
As men in the old times, before the harps began,
Poured out wine for the high invisible ones.*

September 1900

379 *The Harp of Aengus*

*Edain came out of Midhir's hill, and lay
Beside young Aengus in his tower of glass,
Where time is drowned in odour-laden winds
And Druid moons, and murmuring of boughs,
And sleepy boughs, and boughs where apples made
Of opal and ruby and pale chrysolite
Awake unsleeping fires; and wove seven strings,
Sweet with all music, out of his long hair,
Because her hands had been made wild by love.
When Midhir's wife had changed her to a fly,
He made a harp with Druid apple-wood
That she among her winds might know he wept;
And from that hour he has watched over none
But faithful lovers.*

10

79 *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.

80 *Old Memory*

O thought, fly to her when the end of day
 Awakens an old memory, and say,
 'Your strength, that is so lofty and fierce and kind,
 It might call up a new age, calling to mind
 The queens that were imagined long ago,
 Is but half yours: he kneaded in the dough
 Through the long years of youth, and who would have
 thought
 It all, and more than it all, would come to naught,
 And that dear words meant nothing?' But enough,
 For when we have blamed the wind we can blame love;
 Or, if there needs be more, be nothing said
 That would be harsh for children that have strayed.

81 *Never give all the Heart*

Never give all the heart, for love
 Will hardly seem worth thinking of
 To passionate women if it seem
 Certain, and they never dream
 That it fades out from kiss to kiss;
 For everything that's lovely is
 But a brief, dreamy, kind delight.
 O never give the heart outright,
 For they, for all smooth lips can say,
 Have given their hearts up to the play.
 And who could play it well enough
 If deaf and dumb and blind with love?
 He that made this knows all the cost,
 For he gave all his heart and lost.

10

82 *The Withering of the Boughs*

I cried when the moon was murmuring to the birds:
 Let peewit call and curlew cry where they will,
 I long for your merry and tender and pitiful words,
 For the roads are unending, and there is no place to my
 mind.'

The honey-pale moon lay low on the sleepy hill,
 And I fell asleep upon lonely Echtge of streams.
No boughs have withered because of the wintry wind;
The boughs have withered because I have told them my dreams.

I know of the leafy paths that the witches take
 Who come with their crowns of pearl and their spindles
 of wool,
 And their secret smile, out of the depths of the lake;
 I know where a dim moon drifts, where the Danaan kind
 Wind and unwind dancing when the light grows cool

10

In the Seven Woods

77 *In the Seven Woods*

I have heard the pigeons of the Seven Woods
Make their faint thunder, and the garden bees
Hum in the lime-tree flowers; and put away
The unavailing outcries and the old bitterness
That empty the heart. I have forgot awhile
Tara uprooted, and new commonness
Upon the throne and crying about the streets
And hanging its paper flowers from post to post,
Because it is alone of all things happy.
I am contented, for I know that Quiet 10
Wanders laughing and eating her wild heart
Among pigeons and bees, while that Great Archer,
Who but awaits His hour to shoot, still hangs
A cloudy quiver over Pairc-na-lee.

August 1902

78 *The Arrow*

I thought of your beauty, and this arrow,
Made out of a wild thought, is in my marrow.
There's no man may look upon her, no man,
As when newly grown to be a woman,
Tall and noble but with face and bosom
Delicate in colour as apple blossom.
This beauty's kinder, yet for a reason
I could weep that the old is out of season.

If he could pass her by
With an indifferent eye.

Whereon I wrote and wrought,
And now, being grey,
I dream that I have brought
To such a pitch my thought
That coming time can say,
'He shadowed in a glass
What thing her body was.'

For she had fiery blood
When I was young,
And trod so sweetly proud
As 'twere upon a cloud,
A woman Homer sung,
That life and letters seem
But an heroic dream.

93 Words

I had this thought a while ago,
'My darling cannot understand
What I have done, or what would do
In this blind bitter land.'

And I grew weary of the sun
Until my thoughts cleared up again,
Remembering that the best I have done
Was done to make it plain;

That every year I have cried, 'At length
My darling understands it all,
Because I have come into my strength,
And words obey my call';

That had she done so who can say
What would have shaken from the sieve?
I might have thrown poor words away
And been content to live.

10

20

10

94 No Second Troy

Why should I blame her that she filled my days
With misery, or that she would of late
Have taught to ignorant men most violent ways,
Or hurled the little streets upon the great,
Had they but courage equal to desire?
What could have made her peaceful with a mind
That nobleness made simple as a fire,
With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind
That is not natural in an age like this,
Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn?

10

95 Reconciliation

'Some may have blamed you that you took away
The verses that could move them on the day
When, the ears being deafened, the sight of the eyes blind
With lightning, you went from me, and I could find
Nothing to make a song about but kings,
Helmets, and swords, and half-forgotten things
That were like memories of you – but now
We'll out, for the world lives as long ago;
And while we're in our laughing, weeping fit,
Hurl helmets, crowns, and swords into the pit.
But, dear, cling close to me; since you were gone,
My barren thoughts have chilled me to the bone.'

10

96 King and no King

'Would it were anything but merely voice!'
The No King cried who after that was King,
Because he had not heard of anything
That balanced with a word is more than noise;

Yet Old Romance being kind, let him prevail
 Somewhere or somehow that I have forgot,
 Though he'd but cannon – Whereas we that had thought
 To have lit upon as clean and sweet a tale
 Have been defeated by that pledge you gave
 In momentary anger long ago; 10
 And I that have not your faith, how shall I know
 That in the blinding light beyond the grave
 We'll find so good a thing as that we have lost?
 The hourly kindness, the day's common speech,
 The habitual content of each with each
 When neither soul nor body has been crossed.

97 *Peace*

Ah, that Time could touch a form
 That could show what Homer's age
 Bred to be a hero's wage.
 'Were not all her life but storm,
 Would not painters paint a form
 Of such noble lines,' I said,
 'Such a delicate high head,
 All that sternness amid charm,
 All that sweetness amid strength?' 10
 Ah, but peace that comes at length,
 Came when Time had touched her form.

98 *Against Unworthy Praise*

O heart, be at peace, because
 Nor knave nor dolt can break
 What's not for their applause,
 Being for a woman's sake.
 Enough if the work has seemed,
 So did she your strength renew,
 A dream that a lion had dreamed
 Till the wilderness cried aloud,

A secret between you two,
 Between the proud and the proud. 10
 What, still you would have their praise!
 But here's a haughtier text,
 The labyrinth of her days
 That her own strangeness perplexed;
 And how what her dreaming gave
 Earned slander, ingratitude,
 From self-same dolt and knave;
 Aye, and worse wrong than these.
 Yet she, singing upon her road,
 Half lion, half child, is at peace. 20

99 *The Fascination of What's Difficult*

The fascination of what's difficult
 Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent
 Spontaneous joy and natural content
 Out of my heart. There's something ails our colt
 That must, as if it had not holy blood
 Nor on Olympus leaped from cloud to cloud,
 Shiver under the lash, strain, sweat and jolt
 As though it dragged road metal. My curse on plays
 That have to be set up in fifty ways,
 On the day's war with every knave and dolt, 10
 Theatre business, management of men.
 I swear before the dawn comes round again
 I'll find the stable and pull out the bolt.

100 *A Drinking Song*

Wine comes in at the mouth
 And love comes in at the eye;

That's all we shall know for truth
Before we grow old and die.
I lift the glass to my mouth,
I look at you, and I sigh.

101 The Coming of Wisdom with Time

Though leaves are many, the root is one;
Through all the lying days of my youth
I swayed my leaves and flowers in the sun;
Now I may wither into the truth.

102 On hearing that the Students of our New University have joined the Agitation against Immoral Literature

Where, where but here have Pride and Truth,
That long to give themselves for wage,
To shake their wicked sides at youth
Restraining reckless middle-age?

103 To a Poet, who would have me Praise certain Bad Poets, Imitators of His and Mine

You say, as I have often given tongue
In praise of what another's said or sung,

"Twere politic to do the like by these;
But was there ever dog that praised his fleas?

104 The Mask

'Put off that mask of burning gold
With emerald eyes.'

'O no, my dear, you make so bold
To find if hearts be wild and wise,
And yet not cold.'

'I would but find what's there to find,
Love or deceit.'

'It was the mask engaged your mind,
And after set your heart to beat,
Not what's behind.'

10

'But lest you are my enemy,
I must enquire.'

'O no, my dear, let all that be;
What matter, so there is but fire
In you, in me?'

105 Upon a House shaken by the Land Agitation

How should the world be luckier if this house,
Where passion and precision have been one
Time out of mind, became too ruinous
To breed the lidless eye that loves the sun?
And the sweet laughing eagle thoughts that grow
Where wings have memory of wings, and all
That comes of the best knit to the best? Although
Mean roof-trees were the sturdier for its fall,
How should their luck run high enough to reach
The gifts that govern men, and after these

10

To gradual Time's last gift, a written speech
Wrought of high laughter, loveliness and ease?

106 At the Abbey Theatre

(Imitated from Ronsard)

Dear Craobhin Aoibhin, look into our case.
When we are high and airy hundreds say
That if we hold that flight they'll leave the place,
While those same hundreds mock another day
Because we have made our art of common things,
So bitterly, you'd dream they longed to look
All their lives through into some drift of wings.
You've dandled them and fed them from the book
And know them to the bone; impart to us –
We'll keep the secret – a new trick to please.
Is there a bridle for this Proteus
That turns and changes like his draughty seas?
Or is there none, most popular of men,
But when they mock us, that we mock again? 10

107 These are the Clouds

These are the clouds about the fallen sun,
The majesty that shuts his burning eye:
The weak lay hand on what the strong has done,
Till that be tumbled that was lifted high
And discord follow upon unison,
And all things at one common level lie.
And therefore, friend, if your great race were run
And these things came, so much the more thereby
Have you made greatness your companion,
Although it be for children that you sigh:
These are the clouds about the fallen sun,
The majesty that shuts his burning eye. 10

108 At Galway Races

There where the course is,
Delight makes all of the one mind,
The riders upon the galloping horses,
The crowd that closes in behind:
We, too, had good attendance once,
Hearers and hearteners of the work;
Aye, horsemen for companions,
Before the merchant and the clerk
Breathed on the world with timid breath.
Sing on: somewhere at some new moon,
We'll learn that sleeping is not death,
Hearing the whole earth change its tune,
Its flesh being wild, and it again
Crying aloud as the racecourse is,
And we find hearteners among men
That ride upon horses. 10

109 A Friend's Illness

Sickness brought me this
Thought, in that scale of his:
Why should I be dismayed
Though flame had burned the whole
World, as it were a coal,
Now I have seen it weighed
Against a soul?

110 All Things can tempt Me

All things can tempt me from this craft of verse:
One time it was a woman's face, or worse –
The seeming needs of my fool-driven land;

I42

*While I, from that reed-throated whisperer
Who comes at need, although not now as once
A clear articulation in the air,
But inwardly, surmise companions
Beyond the fling of the dull ass's hoof,
— Ben Jonson's phrase — and find when June is come
At Kyle-na-no under that ancient roof
A sterner conscience and a friendlier home,
I can forgive even that wrong of wrongs,
Those undreamt accidents that have made me
— Seeing that Fame has perished this long while,
Being but a part of ancient ceremony —
Notorious, till all my priceless things
Are but a post the passing dogs defile.*

The Wild Swans at Coole

1919

Ran out of my sight;
Though I had long perned in the gyre,
Between my hatred and desire,
I saw my freedom won
And all laugh in the sun.

The glittering eyes in a death's head
Of old Luke Wadding's portrait said
Welcome, and the Ormondes all
Nodded upon the wall,
And even Strafford smiled as though
It made him happier to know
I understood his plan.
Now that the loud beast ran
There was no portrait in the Gallery
But beckoned to sweet company,
For all men's thoughts grew clear
Being dear as mine are dear.

But soon a tear-drop started up,
For aimless joy had made me stop
Beside the little lake
To watch a white gull take
A bit of bread thrown up into the air;
Now gyring down and perning there
He splashed where an absurd
Portly green-pated bird
Shook off the water from his back;
Being no more demoniac
A stupid happy creature
Could rouse my whole nature.

Yet I am certain as can be
That every natural victory
Belongs to beast or demon,
That never yet had freeman
Right mastery of natural things,
And that mere growing old, that brings
Chilled blood, this sweetness brought;

10

..

10

Yet have no dearer thought
Than that I may find out a way
To make it linger half a day.
O what a sweetness strayed
Through barren Thebaid,
Or by the Mareotic sea
When that exultant Anthony
And twice a thousand more
Starved upon the shore
And withered to a bag of bones!
What had the Caesars but their thrones? 50

50

200 *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? 20

10

20

Whatever flames upon the night
Man's own resinous heart has fed.

219 *Fragments*

I

Locke sank into a swoon;
The Garden died;
God took the spinning-jenny
Out of his side.

II

Where got I that truth?
Out of a medium's mouth,
Out of nothing it came,
Out of the forest loam,
Out of dark night where lay
The crowns of Nineveh.

220 *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?

1923

221 *On a Picture of a Black Centaur by Edmund Dulac*

Your hooves have stamped at the black margin of the wood,
Even where horrible green parrots call and swing.
My works are all stamped down into the sultry mud.
I knew that horse-play, knew it for a murderous thing.
What wholesome sun has ripened is wholesome food to eat,
And that alone; yet I, being driven half insane
Because of some green wing, gathered old mummy wheat
In the mad abstract dark and ground it grain by grain
And after baked it slowly in an oven; but now
I bring full-flavoured wine out of a barrel found
Where seven Ephesian topers slept and never knew
When Alexander's empire passed, they slept so sound.
Stretch out your limbs and sleep a long Saturnian sleep;
I have loved you better than my soul for all my words,
And there is none so fit to keep a watch and keep
Unwearied eyes upon those horrible green birds.

10

222 *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

317 IX. The Four Ages of Man

He with body waged a fight,
But body won; it walks upright.

Then he struggled with the heart;
Innocence and peace depart.

Then he struggled with the mind;
His proud heart he left behind.

Now his wars on God begin;
At stroke of midnight God shall win.

318 X. Conjunctions

If Jupiter and Saturn meet,
What a crop of mummy wheat!

The sword's a cross; thereon He died:
On breast of Mars the goddess sighed.

319 XI. A Needle's Eye

All the stream that's roaring by
Came out of a needle's eye;
Things unborn, things that are gone,
From needle's eye still goad it on.

320 XII. Meru

Civilisation is hooped together, brought
Under a rule, under the semblance of peace
By manifold illusion; but man's life is thought,
And he, despite his terror, cannot cease
Ravelling through century after century,
Ravelling, raging, and uprooting that he may come
Into the desolation of reality:
Egypt and Greece good-bye, and good-bye, Rome!
Hermits upon Mount Meru or Everest,
Cavered in night under the drifted snow,
Or where that snow and winter's dreadful blast
Beat down upon their naked bodies, know
That day brings round the night, that before dawn
His glory and his monuments are gone.