

### 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?

W. B. Yeats, 1921

### Sailing to Byzantium

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, fowl, commend all summer long  
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.

Caught in that sensual music all neglect  
Monuments of unageing intellect.

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.

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.

Once out of nature I shall never take  
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  
To lords and ladies of Byzantium  
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

**W. B. Yeats, 1927**

### Coole Park and Ballylee

Under my window-ledge the waters race,  
Otters below and moor-hens on the top,  
Run for a mile undimmed in Heaven's face  
Then darkening through 'dark' Raftery's 'cellar' drop,  
Run underground, rise in a rocky place  
In Coole demesne, and there to finish up  
Spread to a lake and drop into a hole.  
What's water but the generated soul?

Upon the border of that lake's a wood  
Now all dry sticks under a wintry sun,  
And in a copse of beeches there I stood,  
For Nature's pulled her tragic buskin on  
And all the rant's a mirror of my mood:  
At sudden thunder of the mounting swan  
I turned about and looked where branches break  
The glittering reaches of the flooded lake.

Another emblem there! That stormy white  
But seems a concentration of the sky;  
And, like the soul, it sails into the sight  
And in the morning's gone, no man knows why;  
And is so lovely that it sets to right  
What knowledge or its lack had set awry,  
So arrogantly pure, a child might think  
It can be murdered with a spot of ink.

Sound of a stick upon the floor, a sound  
From somebody that toils from chair to chair;  
Beloved books that famous hands have bound,  
Old marble heads, old pictures everywhere;  
Great rooms where travelled men and children found  
Content or joy; a last inheritor  
Where none has reigned that lacked a name and fame  
Or out of folly into folly came.

A spot whereon the founders lived and died  
Seemed once more dear than life; ancestral trees,

Or gardens rich in memory glorified  
Marriages, alliances and families,  
And every bride's ambition satisfied.  
Where fashion or mere fantasy decrees  
We shift about—all that great glory spent—  
Like some poor Arab tribesman and his tent.

We were the last romantics—chose for theme  
Traditional sanctity and loveliness;  
Whatever's written in what poets name  
The book of the people; whatever most can bless  
The mind of man or elevate a rhyme;  
But all is changed, that high horse riderless,  
Though mounted in that saddle Homer rode  
Where the swan drifts upon a darkening flood.

**W. B. Yeats 1931**

**i like my body when it is with your body**

i like my body when it is with your  
body. It is so quite new a thing.  
muscles better and nerves more.  
i like your body. i like what it does,  
i like its hows. i like to feel the spine  
of your body and its bones, and the trembling  
-firm-smooth ness and which i will  
again and again and again  
kiss, i like kissing this and that of you,  
i like, slowly stroking the, shocking fuzz  
of your electric fur, and what-is-it comes  
over parting flesh ... And eyes big love-crumbs,  
and possibly i like the thrill  
of under me you so quite new

**e e cummings, 1925**

Spring is like a perhaps hand  
(which comes carefully  
out of Nowhere)arranging  
a window,into which people look(while  
people stare  
arranging and changing placing  
carefully there a strange  
thing and a known thing here)and

changing everything carefully

spring is like a perhaps  
Hand in a window  
(carefully to  
and fro moving New and  
Old things,while  
people stare carefully  
moving a perhaps  
fraction of flower here placing  
an inch of air there)and

without breaking anything.

**e e cummings, 1925**

somewhere i have never travelled,gladly beyond  
any experience,your eyes have their silence:  
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,  
or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclose me  
though i have closed myself as fingers,  
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens  
(touching skilfully,mysteriously)her first rose

or if your wish be to close me,i and  
my life will shut very beautifully,suddenly,  
as when the heart of this flower imagines  
the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals  
the power of your intense fragility:whose texture  
compels me with the colour of its countries,  
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes  
and opens;only something in me understands  
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)  
nobody,not even the rain,has such small hands

**e e cummings, 1931**

**anyone lived in a pretty how town**

anyone lived in a pretty how town  
(with up so floating many bells down)  
spring summer autumn winter  
he sang his didn't he danced his did.

Women and men (both little and small)  
cared for anyone not at all  
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same  
sun moon stars rain

children guessed (but only a few  
and down they forgot as up they grew  
autumn winter spring summer)  
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf  
she laughed his joy she cried his grief  
bird by snow and stir by still  
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones  
laughed their cryings and did their dance  
(sleep wake hope and then)they  
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon  
(and only the snow can begin to explain  
how children are apt to forget to remember  
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess  
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)  
busy folk buried them side by side  
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep  
and more by more they dream their sleep  
noone and anyone earth by april  
with by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men (both dong and ding)  
summer autumn winter spring  
reaped their sowing and went their came  
sun moon stars rain

**e e cummings, 1940**

old age sticks  
up Keep  
off  
signs)&

youth yanks them down(old  
age  
cries No

Tres)&(pas)  
youth laughs  
(sing

old age

scolds Forbid  
den  
Stop  
Must  
n't Don't

&)youth goes  
right on  
gr  
owing old.

**e e cummings, 1958**

**Snake (1923)**

A snake came to my water-trough  
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,  
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree  
I came down the steps with my pitcher  
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom  
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of  
the stone trough  
And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,  
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,  
He sipped with his straight mouth,  
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,  
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,  
And I, like a second comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,  
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,  
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,  
And stooped and drank a little more,  
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth  
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.  
The voice of my education said to me  
He must be killed,  
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man  
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,  
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough  
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,  
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him? Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him? Was it humility, to feel so honoured?

I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:

*If you were not afraid, you would kill him!*

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid, But even so, honoured still more  
That he should seek my hospitality  
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough  
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,  
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,  
Seeming to lick his lips,  
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,  
And slowly turned his head,  
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,  
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round  
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,  
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,  
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid  
black hole,  
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,  
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,  
I picked up a clumsy log  
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,  
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste.  
Writhed like lightning, and was gone  
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front,  
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.  
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!  
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross  
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,  
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,  
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords  
Of life.  
And I have something to expiate:  
A pettiness.

**D. H. Lawrence (1923)**

from **Pansies**

**Self Pity**

I never saw a wild thing  
sorry for itself.  
A small bird will drop frozen dead from a bough  
without ever having felt sorry for itself.

**New Moon**

The new moon, of no importance  
lingers behind as the yellow sun glares and is gone beyond the sea's edge;  
earth smokes blue;  
the new moon, in cool height above the blushes,  
brings a fresh fragrance of heaven to our senses.

**D. H. Lawrence (1929)**

## Bavarian Gentians

Not every man has gentians in his house  
in soft September, at slow, sad Michaelmas.

Bavarian gentians, big and dark, only dark  
darkening the daytime torchlike with the smoking blueness of Pluto's gloom,  
ribbed and torchlike, with their blaze of darkness spread blue  
down flattening into points, flattened under the sweep of white day  
torch-flower of the blue-smoking darkness, Pluto's dark-blue daze,  
black lamps from the halls of Dis, burning dark blue,  
giving off darkness, blue darkness, as Demeter's pale lamps give off light,  
lead me then, lead me the way.

Reach me a gentian, give me a torch  
let me guide myself with the blue, forked torch of this flower  
down the darker and darker stairs, where blue is darkened on blueness.  
even where Persephone goes, just now, from the frosted September  
to the sightless realm where darkness was awake upon the dark  
and Persephone herself is but a voice  
or a darkness invisible enfolded in the deeper dark  
of the arms Plutonic, and pierced with the passion of dense gloom,  
among the splendor of torches of darkness, shedding darkness on  
the lost bride and groom.

**D. H. Lawrence, 1930**

## The Ship of Death

I

Now it is autumn and the falling fruit  
and the long journey towards oblivion.

The apples falling like great drops of dew

to bruise themselves an exit from themselves.

And it is time to go, to bid farewell  
to one's own self, and find an exit  
from the fallen self.

## II

Have you built your ship of death, O have you?  
O build your ship of death, for you will need it.

The grim frost is at hand, when the apples will fall  
thick, almost thundrous, on the hardened earth.

And death is on the air like a smell of ashes!  
Ah! can't you smell it?

And in the bruised body, the frightened soul  
finds itself shrinking, wincing from the cold  
that blows upon it through the orifices.

## III

And can a man his own quietus make  
with a bare bodkin?

With daggers, bodkins, bullets, man can make  
a bruise or break of exit for his life;  
but is that a quietus, O tell me, is it quietus?

Surely not so! for how could murder, even self-murder  
ever a quietus make?

## IV

O let us talk of quiet that we know,  
that we can know, the deep and lovely quiet  
of a strong heart at peace!

How can we this, our own quietus, make?

## V

Build then the ship of death, for you must take  
the longest journey, to oblivion.

And die the death, the long and painful death  
that lies between the old self and the new.

Already our bodies are fallen, bruised, badly bruised,  
already our souls are oozing through the exit  
of the cruel bruise.

Already the dark and endless ocean of the end  
is washing in through the breaches of our wounds,  
already the flood is upon us.

Oh build your ship of death, your little ark  
and furnish it with food, with little cakes, and wine  
for the dark flight down oblivion.

## VI

Piecemeal the body dies, and the timid soul  
has her footing washed away, as the dark flood rises.

We are dying, we are dying, we are all of us dying  
and nothing will stay the death-flood rising within us  
and soon it will rise on the world, on the outside world.

We are dying, we are dying, piecemeal our bodies are dying  
and our strength leaves us,  
and our soul cowers naked in the dark rain over the flood,  
covering in the last branches of the tree of our life.

## VII

We are dying, we are dying, so all we can do  
is now to be willing to die, and to build the ship  
of death to carry the soul on the longest journey.

A little ship, with oars and food  
and little dishes, and all accoutrements  
fitting and ready for the departing soul.

Now launch the small ship, now as the body dies  
and life departs, launch out, the fragile soul  
in the fragile ship of courage, the ark of faith  
with its store of food and little cooking pans  
and change of clothes,  
upon the flood's black waste  
upon the waters of the end  
upon the sea of death, where still we sail  
darkly, for we cannot steer, and have no port.

There is no port, there is nowhere to go  
only the deepening black darkening still  
blacker upon the soundless, ungurgling flood  
darkness at one with darkness, up and down  
and sideways utterly dark, so there is no direction any more  
and the little ship is there; yet she is gone.  
She is not seen, for there is nothing to see her by.  
She is gone! gone! and yet  
somewhere she is there.  
Nowhere!

## VIII

And everything is gone, the body is gone  
completely under, gone, entirely gone.  
The upper darkness is heavy as the lower,  
between them the little ship  
is gone  
she is gone.

It is the end, it is oblivion.

## IX

And yet out of eternity a thread

separates itself on the blackness,  
a horizontal thread  
that fumes a little with pallor upon the dark.

Is it illusion? or does the pallor fume  
A little higher?  
Ah wait, wait, for there's the dawn,  
the cruel dawn of coming back to life  
out of oblivion.

Wait, wait, the little ship  
drifting, beneath the deathly ashy grey  
of a flood-dawn.

Wait, wait! even so, a flush of yellow  
and strangely, O chilled wan soul, a flush of rose.

A flush of rose, and the whole thing starts again.

X

The flood subsides, and the body, like a worn sea-shell  
emerges strange and lovely.  
And the little ship wings home, faltering and lapsing  
on the pink flood,  
and the frail soul steps out, into the house again  
filling the heart with peace.

Swings the heart renewed with peace  
even of oblivion.

Oh build your ship of death, oh build it!  
for you will need it.  
For the voyage of oblivion awaits you.

**D. H. Lawrence (1933)**