## In Memory of W. B. Yeats

(d. January 1939)

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He disappeared in the dead of winter:
The brooks were frozen, the air-ports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues;
The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day.
O all the instruments agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

Far from his illness
The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays;
By mourning tongues
The death of the poet was kept from his poems.

But for him it was his last afternoon as himself,
An afternoon of nurses and rumours;
The provinces of his body revolted,
The squares of his mind were empty,
Silence invaded the suburbs,
The current of his feeling failed: he became his admirers.

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
And wholly given over to unfamiliar affections;
To find his happiness in another kind of wood
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.
The words of a dead man
Are modified in the guts of the living.

But in the importance and noise of to-morrow When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the

floor of the Bourse.

And the poor have the sufferings to which

they are fairly accustomed,

And each in the cell of himself is almost

convinced of his freedom:

A few thousand will think of this day
As one thinks of a day when one did something
slightly unusual.

O all the instruments agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

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You were silly like us: your gift survived it all; The parish of rich women, physical decay, Yourself; mad Ireland hurt you into poetry. Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still, For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives In the valley of its saying where executives Would never want to tamper; it flows south From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs, Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives, A way of happening, a mouth.

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Earth, receive an honoured guest; William Yeats is laid to rest: Let the Irish vessel lie Emptied of its poetry.

Time that is intolerant
Of the brave and innocent,
And indifferent in a week
To a beautiful physique,

Worships language and forgives Everyone by whom it lives; Pardons cowardice, conceit, Lays its honours at their feet.

Time that with this strange excuse Pardoned Kipling and his views, And will pardon Paul Claudel, Pardons him for writing well.

In the nightmare of the dark All the dogs of Europe bark, And the living nations wait, Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse Make a vineyard of the curse, Sing of human unsuccess In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart

Let the healing fountain start,

In the prison of his days

Teach the free man how to praise.

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