

# "Easter, 1916"

By William Butler Yeats

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and  
markup by Students and Staff of the University of Virginia*

MICHAEL ROBARTES AND THE  
DANCER, BY WILLIAM BUTLER  
YEATS.

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## EASTER, 1916.

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

17 That woman's days were spent  
18 In ignorant good-will,  
19 Her nights in argument  
20 Until her voice grew shrill.  
21 What voice more sweet than hers  
22 When, young and beautiful,  
23 She rode to harriers?  
24 This man had kept a school  
25 And rode our winged horse;  
26 This other his helper and friend

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27 Was coming into his force;  
28 He might have won fame in the end,  
29 So sensitive his nature seemed,  
30 So daring and sweet his thought.  
31 This other man I had dreamed  
32 A drunken, vain-glorious lout.  
33 He had done most bitter wrong  
34 To some who are near my heart,  
35 Yet I number him in the song;  
36 He, too, has resigned his part  
37 In the casual comedy;

38 He, too, has been changed in his turn,  
39 Transformed utterly:  
40 A terrible beauty is born.

41 Hearts with one purpose alone  
42 Through summer and winter seem  
43 Enchanted to a stone  
44 To trouble the living stream.  
45 The horse that comes from the road,  
46 The rider, the birds that range  
47 From cloud to tumbling cloud,  
48 Minute by minute they change;  
49 A shadow of cloud on the stream  
50 Changes minute by minute;  
51 A horse-hoof slides on the brim,  
52 And a horse plashes within it;  
53 The long-legged moor-hens dive,  
54 And hens to moor-cocks call.

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55 Minute by minute they live:  
56 The stone's in the midst of all.

57 Too long a sacrifice  
58 Can make a stone of the heart.  
59 O when may it suffice?  
60 That is heaven's part, our part  
61 To murmur name upon name,  
62 As a mother names her child  
63 When sleep at last has come  
64 On limbs that had run wild.  
65 What is it but nightfall?  
66 No, no, not night but death;  
67 Was it needless death after all?  
68 For England may keep faith  
69 For all that is done and said.  
70 We know their dream; enough  
71 To know they dreamed and are dead;  
72 And what if excess of love  
73 Bewildered them till they died?  
74 I write it out in a verse—  
75 MacDonagh and MacBride  
76 And Connolly and Pearse  
77 Now and in time to be,  
78 Wherever green is worn,  
79 Are changed, changed utterly:  
80 A terrible beauty is born.

September 25th, 1916