**AN IRISH AIRMAN FORESEES HIS DEATH**

W.B. Yeats

I know that I shall meet my fate

Somewhere among the clouds above;

Those that I fight I do not hate,

Those that I guard I do not love;

My country is Kiltartan Cross,

My countrymen Kiltartan’s poor,

No likely end could bring them loss

Or leave them happier than before.

Nor law, or duty bade me fight,

Nor public men, nor cheering crowds,

A lonely impulse of delight

Drove to this tumult in the clouds;

I balanced all, brought all to mind,

The years to come seemed waste of breath,

A waste of breath the years behind

In balance with this life, this death.

*Major Robert Gregory, recipient of the Military Cross and the Legion d’Honneur, was killed in action when his plane was shot down on the Italian front in January 1918. He, like Yeats, was Irish, and at the time of WWI, the Irish were divided—the Nationalists who supported Irish independence and opposed England and those who believed that Germany threatened not only England but Ireland as well.*

**next to of course**

e.e. cummings

‘next to of course god America i

love you land of the pilgrims’ and so forth oh

say can you see by the dawn’s early my

country ‘tis of centuries come and go

and are no more what of it we should worry

in every language even deafanddumb

thy sons acclaim your glorious name by gorry

by jingo by gee by gosh by gum

why talk of beauty what could be more beaut-

iful than these heroic happy dead

who rushed like lions to the roaring slaughter

they did not stop to think they died instead

then shall the voice of liberty be mute?’

He spoke. And drank rapidly a glass of water.

*In 1917, Cummings, an American, joined an ambulance corps sponsored by a privately funded organization. He and a friend were arrested by French authorities on suspicion of espionage and undesirable activities because of letters they wrote which criticized the war. Upon release, he returned to the U.S. and was drafted into the US Army in 1918.*

**PEACE**

Rupert Brooke

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,

 And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,

With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power

 To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,

Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,

 Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,

And half-men, and their dirty sons and dreary,

 And all the little emptiness of love!

Oh! We, who have known shame, we have found release there,

 Where there’s no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending.

 Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;

Nothing to shake the laughing heart’s long peace there

 But only agony, and that has ending;

 And the worse friend and enemy is but Death.