

The Ceremony of Innocence
(The Second Coming)
Yeats

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer.
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,
And ev'rywhere
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 the 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 around it wheel
Shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again
And now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle

And what rough beast
Slouches towards Bethlehem
To be born?