



POETRY
FOUNDATION

[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [The Second Coming by William Butler Yeats](#)

The Second Coming

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Audio Player

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?

Source: *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (1989)

RELATED CONTENT

Discover this poem's context and related poetry, articles, and media.

POET

William Butler Yeats

SUBJECTS

Religion, God & the Divine, Social Commentaries, History & Politics

POET'S REGION

Ireland & Northern Ireland

SCHOOL / PERIOD

Modern

POETIC TERMS

Allusion

Mixed

[Report a problem with this poem.](#)

POETRY

The oldest monthly devoted to verse in the English language.



[July/August 2016 Table of Contents](#)

[Buy This Issue](#)

[Subscribe to *Poetry* Magazine](#)

[Browse All Issues Back to 1912](#)