

is a short poem that blisters with apocalyptic ominousness. Its first line, "turning and turning in the widening gyre," locates the whole poem inside an expanding gyre, or spiral, making it clear that something is moving and changing, and the world will never be the same. The poem's second line zooms from that gigantic, unclear beginning straight into a very specific and symbolic image--the falcon, which has lost touch with its falconer. This line essentially implies that the "falcon," which likely represents humanity, has become detached from its "falconer," some sort of controller or holder that once kept it in order. Lines three through six describe collapse and turmoil, a dissolution of order and a rising tide of violence and revolution without cause. In the seventh and eighth lines, Yeats mourns that the best people have become silent and resigned to their fate, while villains are the ones in power, speaking the loudest and caring the most about their causes. Innocence and rituals celebrating purity have been destroyed, and a wave of violence is washing over the land, drowning everything in its path. He has taken stock of all that is going on, and he knows that certainly something large must be happening--all this chaos cannot be accidental; it must be part of an event of apocalyptic proportions.