

## Analyzing Figures of Speech in Yeats's Poem *The Second Coming*

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### **Abstract**

*This article attempts to analyze figures of speech in Yeats's poem The Second Coming. Figures of speech are literary devices that turn an ordinary language into a special language through an artful deviation from the ordinary or principal signification of a word, and through an artful deviation from the ordinary arrangement of words. The article writer underscores some words and verse lines that function as figures of speech in the poem. He tries his best to describe the figures of speech which have become the foundations for the themes of the poems. This article is significant to teachers and students who are interested in learning figures of speech in literary genres.*

**Keywords:** Figures of speech, poetic language, poetry, William Butler Yeats.

### **Introduction**

William Butler Yeats was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1865. He was a major contributor to the literary revival in Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century. He was intensely influenced by Irish mythology. He admired and valued his culture. He was undoubtedly keen to resist the cultural influences of English dominance in Ireland. He wrote poems and plays which deal with Irish legends and mysticism. He also wrote books about Irish folks. In 1889, he had met Maud Gonne, whose character and political activism deeply influenced him. His work became more political in response to the events that led to the Easter Rising, which he commemorated in 'Easter 1916'. He entered political life when he was elected to the

Irish Senate in 1922. His later works continued to explore the relationship between art and life through symbol and powerful images. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923.

The World War I (1914-1918), Black and Tan War (1919), Russian Revolution (1917), Easter Rebellion in Ireland (1916) and the rise of Fascism resulted in destruction, disintegration of the society, genocide, anarchy, blood shedding, fear, violence and death affected Yeats very badly. His despondent feelings inspired him to produce such a poem. The world for him appeared to be in a state of flux and chaos.



Figure 1 : Scene of war

*The Second Coming* was written in 1919. It was first printed in *The Dial* in 1920, and afterwards it was included in his collection of verses *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* in 1921. Several critics opine that it is one of Yeats's most famous and most anthologized poems. It is also one of the most thematically obscure and difficult to understand. It fuses images and themes involving apocalypse, degrading religion, and the fall of civilizations. It employs three vital symbols: Falcon, Gyre and Sphinx, and other figures of speech like metaphor, simile, hyperbole, allusion, imagery, personification, onomatopoeia, alliteration, consonance, assonance, irony, personification, anaphora, epiphora, rhyme, polyptoton, diacope and aphorism as literary devices or figures of speech.

### Review of the Poem

Yeats uses figures of speech to convey emotions, ideas, and beliefs in this poem. Albright (1997) asserts that “this poem uses Christian imagery regarding the apocalypse and the second coming to allegorically describe the atmosphere of post-war Europe” (p. 35). Childs (2007) considers this poem as “a major work of modernist poetry and has been reprinted in several collections, including *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*” (p. 39). Haughey (2002) maintains that “the poem was written in 1919 in the aftermath of the First World War” (p. 161), and the beginning of the Irish War of Independence that followed the Easter Rising, at a time before the British Government decided to send in the Black and Tans to Ireland. Deane (1998) points out that ‘Yeats used the phrase "the second birth" instead of "the Second Coming" in his first drafts’ (p. 179). Moreover, Rayjada (2017) remarks that “in *The Second Coming*, the great beast emerges from the Spiritus Mundi. Yeats makes an abstract fear become tangible and real”(p. 1). Similarly, Muhammed (2015) maintains that Yeats always strives to believe in some real historical epochs such as “the idea of the return of Christ at the end of the world. He is like a religious preacher finds the solution to the problem of humanity in their return to God” (p. 143). Alabi (2007) adds that *The Second Coming* “uses Christian imagery regarding the apocalypse and second coming allegorically to describe the atmosphere of post-war Europe” (p. 35). Khader (2016) views this poem as “a major work of modernist poetry and has been reprinted in several collections, including *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*” (p. 27). He further adds that “the poem is a wonderful poetic comment not only on the First World War and the traditional standard’s decline but also on the twentieth century man and the terror of new inventions” (p. 27). Coles Editorial Board (1980) highlights the situation when the poet composed this poem with these words "Christianity has lost its power; it can no longer hold society in an orderly structure. Instead, things are flying away, falling apart; our civilization is disintegrating" (p. 54). The Board further claims that “the association between the falcon and the falconer may be also interpreted as the relation between the society on the one hand and the religion on the other, so Christianity has lost its power upon its followers” (p. 54). Abdul- Razzaq (2008) believes that this poem keeps “uniting the poet's political and mystical concerns in an intense and visionary artistic whole” (p. 94). Rashadul (2013) views *The second coming* as “a symbol of its own, gathered

from the history and consciousness of humankind back to the beginning of recorded time, referred to in the poem as *Spiritus Mundi*" (p. 365). Mohammed (2017) holds his view that "Yeats attempted to unite his experience of the world and earn fundamental illuminating vision for his poems similar to that of Dante and Shelley" (p. 143). Foster (1997) pinpoints that "using the image of interlocking gyres, similar to spiral cones, to show the development and reincarnation of the soul helped Yeats to create a complicated system of spirituality" (p. 132). Furthermore, Bruton (2016) assumes that "Yeats inclined toward using the double-gyre, though the gyre was depicted as singular in the poem, which supplies a sort of symbiotic dualism: as one cycle comes to an end, another inaugurates at the point of winding up" (pp. 1-2). Saxena (2013) associates the second coming as the reincarnation of Christ and affirms that "the idea of the second coming of Christ sounds very much like the concept of reincarnation, which lies at the heart of Hinduism" (p. 17). In *Bhagvad Gita*, Lord Krishna, who is also one of the ten *Avatar* of Lord Vishnu, says that whenever there is loss of religion and evil increases in the world he incarnates to re-establish religion and faith into the world (Chapter 4, Verse 7). In the poem, however, Yeats is talking about the second coming of Christ himself.

### **Theoretical Review of Figures of Speech**

Figures of speech are literary devices that decorate and differentiate poetic language from an ordinary language. The poetic language employs ample figures of speech. Kennedy (1991) maintains that a figure of speech may be said to "occur whenever a speaker or writer, for the sake of freshness or emphasis, departs from the usual denotations of words" (p. 584). Wren and Martin (1981) define figure of speech as "a departure from the ordinary form of expression or the ordinary course of ideas in order to produce a greater effect" (p. 488). Figures of speech are divided into tropes and schemes. The word *trope* derives from a Greek word *tropos* that means turn or twist (*tropos*). In rhetoric it indicates twisted word meaning. The word *scheme* derives from a Greek word *schema*, which signifies a shape or configuration. Longaker and Walker (2011) consider a scheme as "a notable arrangement of linguistic form" (p. 144). Trope is an artful deviation from the ordinary or principal signification of a

word, whereas scheme is an artful deviation from the ordinary arrangement of words. This poem employs the following figures of speech:

**Alliteration:** Alliteration is related to a musical device in poetry. Wales (2001) defines alliteration as “the repetition of the initial consonant in two or more words” (p. 14). Example: Sita sang a sweet song. In this sentence, the consonant sound /s/ is repeated in the initial position of the words ‘Sita’, ‘sang’, ‘sweet’ and ‘song’.

**Allusion:** Pugh and Johnson (2018) assert that “allusions refer to a person; a text, a historical moment, or some other such culturally recognized entity or event whether fictitious or factual” (p. 108). A similar idea is expressed by Harmon (2009) who thinks that “a figure of speech that makes brief reference to a historical or literary figure, event or object” (p. 15). Example: A Game of Chess. (Eliot: The Waste Land)

The title alludes to two plays by Thomas Middleton’s play *A Game at Chess* (1627) and *Women Beware Women* (1657), in which a game of chess distracts a mother-in-law, preventing her from noticing that her daughter-in-law is being seduced upstairs. Each move in the chess game mirrors a move in the seduction.

**Anaphora:** Wales (2001) maintains that anaphora is “a popular figure of speech involving repetition of the same word at the beginning of successive clauses, sentences or verses” (p. 19). Example: Arrogance invites hatred. Arrogance leads to destruction.

**Aphorism:** Wales (2001) consider an aphorism as “a pithy statement or maxim expressing some general or gnomic truth about (human) nature” (p. 25). Example: Honesty is the best policy.

**Assonance:** Assonance, which is related to a vowel sound, is one of musical devices in English poetry. According to Abrams (1993), assonance is “the repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds –especially in stressed syllable in a sequence of nearby words” (p. 7). Example: A fat man had a cap. In this sentence, the vowel sound /æ/ is repeated in the words ‘fat’, ‘man’, ‘had’ and ‘cap’.

**Consonance:** Consonance, which involves the repetition of a consonant sound, is also a musical device in poetry. Cuddon (1999) defines consonance as “the close repetition of the identical consonant sounds before and after different vowel sounds” (p. 176). Example: A lad hid under a bed. In this sentence, the consonant sound /d/ is repeated after different vowel sounds /æ /, /ɪ /, and / e / in the words ‘lad’, ‘hid’ and ‘bed’ respectively.

**Diacope:** Diacope is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is repeated with a small number of intervening words. Diacope has originated from a Greek word *thiakhop*, which means “to cut into two.” Cuddon (1999) takes diacope as “the separation of a compound word” (p. 217). This literary device is a repetition of a phrase or word, broken up by other intervening words. Example: to be, or not to be!

This line is from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*. We can notice that the speaker has repeated the phrase “to be,” which is separated by another phrase “or not.” This is called diacope.

**Epistrophe/ Epiphora:** Epistrophe is the repetition of the same word or group of words at the ends of successive clauses. Wales (2001) affirms that epistrophe is “a rhetorical device of repetition by which the last words in successive lines, clauses or sentences are repeated” (p. 132). Example: A fine woman! a fair woman! A sweet woman! (Shakespeare: Othello).

**Hyperbole:** Abrams (1993), asserts that “hyperbole is a bold overstatement, or the extravagant exaggeration of fact or of possibility; it may be used either for serious or ironic or comic effect”(p. 85). Example: Ten thousand saw I at a glance. (Wordsworth: Daffodils)

**Imagery:** Abrams (1993), affirms that “imagery, images taken collectively, is used to signify as the objects and qualities of some perception referred to in a poem or other work of literature” (p. 86). Moreover, Kirsznner and Mandell (1991) contend that “images enable poets to present ideas that would be difficult to convey in any other way” (p. 649). Harmon (2009) defines an image as “a literal and concrete

representation of a sensory experience or of an object that can be known by one or more of the senses. A figurative image involves a turn on the literal meaning of the word” (p. 268). Example: I saw a very tall man. This sentence appeals to our visual sense.

**Irony:** Irony is a figure of speech which involves a gap between reality and appearance, stating and being or thinking and happening. Wales (2001) maintains that “irony is found when the words actually use appear to contradict the sense actually required in the context” (p. 224). Example: The Bagmati River in Kathmandu is very clean. It means to say that it is very dirty.

**Metaphor:** Cuddon (1999) defines metaphor as “a figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another. A comparison is usually implicit; whereas in simile it is explicit” (p. 507) . Example: The world is a stage.

**Onomatopoeia:** Onomatopoeia is an imitation of sounds. Simpson (2004) defines onomatopoeia as “a feature of sound patterning which is often thought to form a bridge between style and content” (p. 67). Example: Ding-dong. It is an imitation of the sound of a ringing bell.

**Personification:** Wales (2001) assumes that “personification is a figure of speech or trope in which inanimate objects, animate non-human or abstract quality is given human attributes” (p. 294). Example: The sky said to the earth, “I will marry you.” In this direct speech, ‘The sky’ and ‘the earth’ are treated as a young boy and a young girl.

**Polyptoton:** Polyptoton involves the repetition of words “derived from the same root. Wales (2001) defines polyptoton as “a figure of rhetoric in which a word is repeated in different case forms” (p. 308). Example: How can we know the dancer from the dance? (W.B. Yeats: Among School Children). In this poetic line, ‘dance’, and ‘dancer’ are repeated and they are derived from the same root ‘dance’.

**Rhyme:** Rhyme is a sound device which involves the same vowel sound followed by the same consonant sound in the words in verse lines. Harmon (2009) defines rhyme

as “the identity of terminal sound between accented syllables, usually occupying corresponding positions in two or more lines of verse” (p. 449) . Example: bright/light , bad/ sad, mind/ find etc.

**Simile:** Simile is a figure of speech which involves a comparison between two dissimilar items by using the syntactic words ‘like’ and ‘as’. Wales (2001) describes simile as “a figure of speech whereby two concepts are imaginatively and descriptively compared” (p. 358). Example: She is like the moon. I wandered lonely as a cloud.

**Symbol:** Cuddon (1999) takes a symbol as “an object, animate or inanimate, which represents or ‘stands for something else” (p. 885). Example: Rose stands for beauty, tiger for experience, lamb for innocence etc.

### Poetry and Poetic Language

Poetry is what the poets create. Poetry as a flexible form of literature replicates the poets’ emotions and experiences with imagination. Hudson (2002) defines poetry as “an interpretation of life through imagination and feelings” (p. 80). Poetry makes a statement implicit through using figures of speech. Poets write one thing to mean something else. Frost contends that “poetry provides the one permissible way of saying one thing and meaning another” (v). The use of figures of speech is one of the popular ways that makes an expression literary in speech and writing.

Poetry reinforces readers to be creative and critical to analyze it. It inspires them to search for artistic beauty of language. Pugh and Johnson (2018) mention that “poetry invites readers to revel in the inherent beauty of language, to luxuriate in its rhythm and flow while pondering the author’s themes and insights” (p. 93). They assert that “poetic language erupts from the ordinary to create art; the words themselves need not be esoteric as much as they must conjure vivid images, arouse fresh emotions, and spark new insights” (p. 93). The language of poetry includes some sort of association between dissimilar things to reveal divergent meanings. They express their view that “poetry invigorates language so that readers can consider life’s beauty and complexity through comparisons daringly fresh and unexpected” (p. 106).

Poetic language is unique. Language, which is a precious souvenir of human civilization, is a means of sharing experiences and ideas, bridging the gap between individuals who have different outlooks and backgrounds. A poet makes his poem affluent and beautiful with the use of figures of speech. Yeats has made an abundant use of figures of speech in this poem.

### Figures of Speech in the Poem

Under this heading, the article writer attempts to analyze figures of speech employed in this poem. Yeats has employed them to show the deplorable condition of the Modern World and to prophesize the future of the world.

#### *The Second Coming* (Title of the poem)

The title *The Second Coming* is an allusion to the Holy Bible. It makes reference to the Biblical reappearance of Christ, as prophesied in Matthew “they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Chapter 24, Verse 30), and the Book of Revelation of St. John in the New Testament “behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book” (Chapter 22, Verse 7). The title also reminds us of saying of Lord Krishna. In Bhagvad Gita, Lord Krishna, who is also one of the ten Avatars of Lord Vishnu, says “*Yada Yada hi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata / Abhyutthanam adharmasya tadatmanam srjamy aham*”. (Translation: Whenever and wherever there is a decline in religious practice, O descendant of Bharata, and a predominant rise of irreligion— at that time I descend Myself). It is taken from Chapter 4, Verse 7). In the poem, however, Yeats is talking about the second coming of Christ.

#### *Turning and turning in the widening gyre* (Line 1)

This poetic line employs diacope as a figure of speech which involves the repetition of the word ‘turning’ with the intervening word ‘and’. A diacope emphasizes, describes, or specifies. It is used to express strong emotion or to draw attention to the repeated phrase. It works by making a phrase memorable and even rhythmic. It creates a sense of disorientation in the poem. The term ‘gyre’ is a big symbol that

indicates a sort of shape like cone spirals or vortexes. Yeats conceived history as a kind of movement of gyres. It is the representation of his concept of time. He believed time to be cyclical, broken up into epochs. The end of one epoch brings about a new epoch, and over time epochs repeat. The action verb 'widening' is a warning indication of distance increasing between God and humans.

This line employs assonance. The repetition of the vowel sound /ɪ / in the words 'turning', 'turning' and 'widening' is an example of assonance. Similarly, there is the repetition of / aɪ / in the words 'widening' and 'gyre'.



Figure 2: Widening gyre

*The falcon cannot hear the falconer;* (Line 2)

The terms 'falcon' and 'falconer' are big symbols that stands for 'human' and 'God' respectively. The falcon is unable to hear the falconer. It reveals a collective loss of religious faith across the world. People are disconnected from their spirituality or the guiding falconer. But they are trying to connect themselves with power, position and property that have made them far from their Maker and parents.

This verse line employs polyptoton as a figure of speech which embraces two words 'falcon' and 'falconer' derived from the same root 'falcon'. This line can also be viewed as having a sub-merged metaphor where the existing condition of humans and God is presented with the help of 'falcon' and 'falconer'. When we focus on the musical device, we can see that this lines uses alliteration in which the consonant sound / f / is repeated in the initial position of the words 'falcon' and 'falconer'.

We can notice the repetition of the vowel sounds / ɔ: / and / ə / in the words ‘falcon’ and ‘falconer’ as assonance.



Figure 3: Falcon flying up in the sky

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;* (Line 3)

‘Things’ can be interpreted in multiple ways. The things can represent human ideas, dogmas, principles, religious beliefs, political views and their activities which are not similar. There is no unity in diversity. There is no harmony. There is only conflict and disorder in the world. The word ‘centre’ is a great metaphor. It represents the prime authority for leading, guiding, teaching, controlling and ultimately holding things together for peace, harmony, cooperation and co-existence. Parents can be the center for the children, teachers can be the centre for the students, political leaders can be the centre for their supporters, religious leaders can be the centre for their followers, laws can be the centre for the people and so on. Unfortunately, the centre in the modern era is very feeble and powerless. It has lost its authority and has become a puppet.

*Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,* (Line 4)

The word ‘anarchy’ appeals to our abstract image. It indicates a situation of violence, terror, disorder and confusion in the world. Yeats uses the word ‘loosed’ to describe

the onset of the violent changes occurring, evoking an uncontrollable burst of fury. We can perceive the slant rhyme formed by the words ‘hold’ pronounced /həʊld/ and ‘world’ pronounced /wɜ:ld/ in lines 3 and 4. The slant rhyme involves the different vowel sounds followed by the same consonant (s).



Figure 4 : Situation of anarchy

*The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere* (Line 5)

The phrase ‘blood-dimmed tide’ appeals to our visual sense. It is a bitter indication of war, violence and conflict resulted in deaths and destruction. The term ‘tide’ indicates a violent excitation resulted in bleeding. The "blood-dimmed tide" is a metaphor for waves of violence.



Figure 5: Human blood on the ground due to war

*The ceremony of innocence is drowned;* (Line 6)

The 'ceremony of innocence' is a metaphor for the entirety of human innocence and goodness. It is drowned. The verb 'drowned' is primarily used with a person or creature, therefore the sentence employs personification in which the 'ceremony of innocence' is treated as if it has human fate to die. It depicts the destruction of innocence in the world. The repetition of the vowel sound / ə / in the words 'ceremony' and 'innocence' is an instance of assonance.

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity* (Lines 7-8)

These lines employ aphorism as a figure of speech. It is a short, pithy statement of universal truth. He is communicating a central truth about his time. The good people are silent, but the fools are loud. The fools are teaching the wise people. The fools are leading the wise. The phrase "the best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity" is also an example of irony, because it is ironic, almost bleakly absurd, that the worst people are the most passionate and the best are the least determined to make their voices heard in Yeats's apocalyptic poem.

*Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand* (Lines 9-10)

These two poetic lines can be viewed from divergent perspectives. These lines employ both anaphora and epiphora as figures of speech. There is the repetition of the word 'surely' in the initial position of the lines. It is an example of anaphora. There is

the repetition of the words 'is at hand' at the end of the successive sentences. It is an example of epiphora. Such figures of speech intensify the feelings and music in the poem. When we focus on its semantic level, these lines are exaggerations, known as hyperboles. The poet wants to stress his view through the hyperbolic statements that the second coming is very near. These lines employ alliteration. The consonant sound /s/ is repeated in the initial position of the words 'surely' and 'some' in the ninth line and in the words 'surely' and 'second' in the tenth line. These lines create the uniformity of sounds. Lines 9 and 10 retain the final autorhyme made up of the two same words 'hand' and 'hand'.

*The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out*

*When a vast image out of 'Spiritus Mundi' (Lines 11-12)*

'The second coming' is an allusion to the Holy Bible. It refers to the arrival of Christ in the world, but in a different way in a terrible form to set everything right. 'The Spiritus Mundi' is an illusion to the Latin phrase meaning the world's spirit. Yeats believed that all humans share a common, vast memory, populated by universal archetypes and myths. This collective consciousness or *Spiritus Mundi*, also described as the Over-soul by Carl Jung, is the source of the bizarre, apocalyptic imagery that leads the poem to its conclusion. 'Spiritus Mundi' is a Latin term which literally means 'the spirit of the world'. People hardly talk about the second coming. Yeats believes that a poet or writer gets inspiration from this Spiritus Mundi. Thinking of the second coming leads the poet to the desert land where he sees a strange creature. He seems to be troubled by the sight of the creature. Line 12 employs assonance as a figure of speech by repeating the vowel /i/ in the words 'image', 'spiritus', and 'mundi'.

*Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert*

*A shape with lion body and the head of a man, (Lines 13-14)*

These lines appeal to our visual sense. The sand of the desert refers to an eerie place, from where a beast with the body of a lion and the head of a man was seen. The poet is describing the sphinx. The sphinx is a mythical creature. He is talking about the

original, archetypal symbol of the sphinx that first inspired the Egyptians to build the big thing in the desert. The sphinx appeals to the visual sense that terrifies us. The poet's vision of the rising Sphinx is his vision of the character of the new world. We can perceive the repetition of the consonant / s / in the initial position of the words 'sight', 'somewhere', and 'sand' as alliteration.



Figure 6 : Sphinx

*A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.* (Lines 15-17)

We can notice the slant rhyme formed by the words 'man' and 'sun' in lines 14 and 15. The slant rhyme involves the different vowel sounds followed by the same consonant (s). The line 15 employs simile as a figure of speech. The beast's gaze is compared with the sun by using a linking word 'as'. The sphinx really seems to have an inhuman expression that is as different as nature itself. It is incapable of having empathy with other humans. It is moving its slow thighs. "Slow thighs" rather than say "slow body" conjures in the mind a kind of cinematic focus on a close-up portion of the sphinx. We can imagine the stone limbs in question grinding forward, dust and

sand shaking off them and the slowness of their movement serves to convey a kind of might and inexorableness. Desert birds feel disturbed by the emergence of this unfamiliar figure and the poet in his vision sees their (the desert birds) shadows reeling around this shape. The sphinx described in the poem symbolizes both destruction and rebirth. It also symbolizes the pagan world that predated the Christian era. Some critics opine that ‘desert birds’ are the symbols of approaching death.



Figure 7 : Desert birds

*The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle, (Lines 18-20)*

The line 18 consists of an intraline graphic or sight rhyme with the words ‘now’ and ‘know’. It is Intraline because it lies within a line and sight rhyme because they look so, but the pronunciation of vowel sounds in the words is different / aʊ / in ‘now’ and / əʊ / in ‘know’. The consonant sound /d / is repeated in the initial position of the words ‘darkness’ and ‘drop’. It is an example of alliteration. Similarly, there is a repetition of the consonant sound / s / in the initial position of the words ‘stony’ and ‘sleep’. These lines remind us of the birth of Jesus Christ. Before Christ, there was darkness in the hearts of the people. There was darkness in people’s life. When Christ was born, they saw a ray of hope in their life. They held the teaching of spirituality to their hearts and worked accordingly. Very figuratively, Yeats mentions that there is darkness in the Modern World. He seems to assume that Christ as a baby has been

sleeping deeply in the cradle. Because of this ‘stony sleep’, people have forgotten his teachings. People are led astray by false teachers. It has been two thousand years since Jesus died for the world’s sins. Yeats believes that the world is on the threshold of an apocalyptic revelation. He considers that every civilization gets changed every two thousand years. The cradle reinforces the image that someone has recently been born and its rocking serves as a metaphor for social commotion. ‘Twenty centuries’ refers to the period that has passed since the first coming of Christ. The sleep of the baby Christ was ‘vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle. Rhetorically, it is the time to be awoken or born in a new way to show the end of the Christian Civilization and to indicate the beginning of a non- Christian Era. It means the poem conceives the 20th century as the point when one gyre of history—the ‘twenty centuries’ of Christianity and ‘progress’—gives way to another. This new era is altogether harder to define, but it looks ominous.

*And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,*

*Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?* (Lines 21-22)

We can perceive alliteration of / r / in the words ‘rough’ and ‘round’, and / b / in the words ‘Bethlehem’ and ‘born’. The ‘rough beast slouching towards Bethlehem’ is the symbol of this new age. The object of Yeats’s vision, which was formerly symbolized as a pitiless sphinx, is now described as a ‘rough beast’ on its way to Bethlehem – the birthplace of Christ "to be born." slouching" of this beast is animalistic and similar to the slow gait of the sphinx in the desert. It sounds more than a little menacing. Yeats is using the birth at Bethlehem as a metaphor of the passage of this malevolent beast from the spirit of the world *Spiritus Mundi* to the real, everyday world, where its effects will be visible to everyone. The beast is approaching Bethlehem in an hour. The great beast slouches towards to be born. It will evolve into a sleeping Christ and will be born as the second Christ or the new messiah. His birth is term as the second coming. But, the second Christ will be different from the first One. He will not be modest, mild, humble, kind and gentle. He will be violent, rude, strong, tyrannical and aggressive to control the people in the Modern World since the people have become selfish, destructive, sterile, pompous, atheistic, violent and malevolent. The sphinx is an indication of a manifestation of a kind of harsh justice required in the modern

society that is very violent and decadent. The apocalypse or collapse of order is personified as a "rough beast" 'Slouch' is an onomatopoeic word that imitates the way of walking slowly and fiercely.

### Conclusion

*The Second Coming* is an illustration of Yeats' philosophy of history. The violent imagery is one of the most significant features of the present poem. The themes seem to be hidden behind the images that Yeats has infused in the poem. It consists of two stanzas. The first stanza has 8 lines, whereas the second stanza retains 14 lines. The first stanza offers a complex vision of the world. The second stanza presents a sort of hope that the second coming is at hand. He concludes by wondering about the nature of this 'rough beast' that slouches towards Bethlehem to be born as a new Christ different from the first one in manner, judgement and personality. This is a complex poem which employs apt divergent figures of speech that contribute to the themes of violence, prophecy, and meaninglessness. This poem maintains that the present world is falling apart, and a new ominous epoch is going to emerge.

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