**Gyre:**

The term “gyre” describes the spiral motion of matter that widens and narrows as it moves around an axis. Also represented as a vortex, a gyre constantly expands or contracts based on its interaction with other matter. Before the modernist period, gyres appear in philosophical and literary texts by Dante Alighieri, Emanuel Swedenborg, and William Blake, among others. This figure emerges most prominently in modernism among the works of W. B. Yeats—particularly, “The Second Coming” (1920), “The Gyres” (1938), and *A Vision* (1925). In *A Vision*, Yeats visually represents a gyre’s movement as an isosceles triangle or a cone, and one gyre often overlaps with another because they are opposed to and, thus, contingent on each other (see Figure 1 from *A Vision* 180–181). For Yeats, examples of such gyres include binary oppositions, such as men/women and beauty/truth, and historical periods. Yeats frequently uses gyres to represent the movement of time at the breaking point between two historical periods, which is marked by a catastrophe of sorts. For example, “The Second Coming” marks the transition between historical periods with the arrival of a second “messiah” at the dawn of antithetical era.

**References and further reading:**

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