

Sailing to Byzantium

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

I

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
—Those dying generations—at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling

Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

Readings

- Students should read the poem so as to discover the general meaning.
- Through this general meaning symbols , images, figure of speech are manipulated so as to find the accurate meaning of the poem.

Key words

- Age vs agelessness
- Mortality vs immortality
- Body vs Soul
- Atheism vs Paganism
- Christianity vs Budhism

Structure

- Contrast
- Parallelism
- Cyclism

Discussion

- Students' responses to the poem.
- Every student should write a critical essay to be discussed in the next lecture.