

Sailing to Byzantium Full Poem

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

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