

Sailing to byzantium

[Experience](#), [Meaning of Life](#)



Elisabeth Garza Ms. Guenat English Comp 2 February 22, 2010 On my first reading of "Sailing to Byzantium", it didn't make much sense, but after reading and doing more research I believe that Yeats's is the older man that is in "Sailing to Byzantium". In a way he was writing this poem to reflect his own life. He wanted to take the reader on a journey through the process of life and death. Yeats lived from 1865 to 1939 and this poem was written in 1926. Yeats has an obsession with the past both the distant past and that of his personal life and these things are symbolic of his fear of growing old or aging and a persistent fear of death. He uses imagery, symbolism, and figurative language to convey a meaning of life, death, and what comes in his poem "Sailing to Byzantium". There is a lot of imagery throughout this poem. I believe it has a lot to do with living, dying and being forgotten. Starting with the first and second sentences in stanza one. "There is no country for old men. The young/ In one another's arms, birds in the trees" (1-2) He himself, Yeats is expressing that he is one of these old men that is in a country that the young have taken over, and full of happiness and love. Then we go into the last two lines in stanza one. "Caught in that sensual music all neglect/ Monuments of unaging intellect". In an article I have read, says that "The birds in the trees sing "sensual music" praising the natural process of procreation, birth and death. But the old man who narrates the poem prefers "monuments" of unaging intellect", which the sensual youth "neglects." "Sensual opposes "intellect" and "begotten, born, and dies" opposes "unaging." (O'Donnell) I also believe this means the narrator is again displaying the hatred of himself being unnoticed by these young people that are enjoying the lives of happiness. The younger people are ignoring all the

knowledge that surrounds them. Yeats modulates from " old men" in the first stanza to a " tattered coat upon a stick" in the second stanza, in which the " aged-man" has become a scarecrow.(Cheuse, Delbanco p. 9) " An aged man is but a paltry thing. " Yeats uses the similarity with a scarecrow, to refer to the lifelessness of someone old. It's like the life has been sucked out of him and nothing is left but a lifeless carcass. Yeats uses the symbol of a scarecrow to represent the weakness of old age. The scarecrow represents a lifeless image symbolizing everything that Yeats wants to discard in his mortal life.