

Compare the presentation of change in yeats"sailing to byzantium'

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Compare the presentation of change in Yeats' 'Sailing to Byzantium' and 'The Second Coming'. Both of Yeats' poems express his opinions and viewpoint of the changes in society and people's beliefs. Through the poem 'The Second Coming' Yeats highlights his belief that the twentieth century had seen the beginning of a new darker era, full of violence and struggles for independence and the effects of the Great War. The second poem 'Sailing to Byzantium' expresses Yeats' observations of old age and the comforting idea of travelling to Byzantium.

Through the poem 'The Second Coming' reflects more than just society and politics within Ireland, but expresses Yeats' turn of attention towards larger scale graphical and spiritual events such as The Great War in 1919. The Christian idea of the 'Second coming' that Christ would return is featured as the centre pin to Yeats' poem as questions what has become of his present day society, and how it had mutated and evolved from the more traditional, biblical times featured in religious stories and beliefs.

The poem showcases Yeats' acute understanding that a potentially dark time is ahead. The poem 'Sailing to Byzantium' features the theme of aging, a popular writing topic of Yeats' also used in other poems such as 'Wild Swans at Coole'. The idea of escaping the unaccommodating world and society of youth, and journeying to a calm Island of Byzantium appears a comforting thought. The poem written in when Yeats was around 60 years old provides insight into his thoughts of what it means to be old. 'The Second Coming' contains links between how Yeats views society and the birth of Christ and the belief he would return. The first stanza of the poem contains imagery of

violence and a lack of order. The phrase 'mere anarchy' highlights the main subject of the poem, the loss of a culture or civilisation, this dark imagery is used throughout the poem, 'Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold' implies that the things at the heart of Yeats' modern culture are literary and metaphorically broken.

This change is described using natural imagery of water; 'the blood-dimmed tide' and 'the ceremony of innocence is drowned' create a sense of fear as the natural power of water is uncontrollable, like the change Yeats is experiencing in the society of his time. This idea that the current society is not appropriate is shared in 'Sailing to Byzantium' as it is explained that it is 'no country for old men' and that 'an aged man is but a paltry thing', both phrases express the feeling of being out of place and unwanted due to aging. Through the development of imagery such as 'the salmon-fall' evoke the energy of youth whilst later 'a dying animal' contrast youth with age allowing Yeats to highlight the change from youth to experience with age. In the poem 'The Second Coming' Yeats uses the line 'the falcon cannot hear the falconer' to give the worrying sense that nature is inverted and things are not as they should be, triggered by the coming change at the birth of a new era.

The lines 'The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity', built on opposites 'best and worst' again support the theme that the change has inverted life for the worst. The religious imagery of the birth of the 'rough beast', as it 'slouches towards Bethlehem' lacks a hint of human qualities, making it a stark contrast to the biblical, gentle saviour of

Christ, but as a dehumanised monster. The use of stark contrast is also used within 'Sailing to Byzantium' between the differences of being young and old, 'the young in one another's arms' carefree and 'sick with desire' of an aged man jealous of the youthful.

The word 'gyre' in both poems is used as a common link to highlight to the reader that the changes occurring in both 'Sailing to Byzantium' and 'The Second Coming' are unavoidable and uncontrollable. While the technique of alliteration, 'Bethlehem to be born' in 'The Second Coming' supports the momentum and inevitability of change and the new era. Also 'Fish, flesh, or fowl' in 'Sailing to Byzantium' has a powerful effect as it recaptures all fish, youth and birds and brings them once again to the attention of the reader, as these three species are examples of youth and support the change experienced by the old.

In conclusion through both poems Yeats expresses different types of change and the extent they have on people and society. While in 'The Second Coming' Yeats focuses on the worrying and almost threatening change in society through the twentieth century he highlights the also worrying, for different reason, inevitability of aging and the want to escape from the struggles of modern, youth controlled society.