

Yeats's "running to
paradise" as a means
to make the argument
for humility



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In "Running to Paradise," W. B. Yeats recounts the conditions present when the speaker in this poem embarks on journey to Paradise and his personal observation from his journey. "Running to Paradise" illustrates the theme of ensuring that successes are always judged relatively. It is only this that will allow individuals to accept failures later on but most importantly to criticize society for losing humility once they themselves achieve success because most often they forget about helping others obtain success as well.

Yeats's shifts from colloquial diction to jargon, illustrates Yeats's fear of having individuals ignore or be unable to understand his warnings about understanding that a society must be both mentally and physically prepared for adversity because a lack of preparedness will make it prone to almost complete collapse and failure. The shift in diction from colloquial to jargon illustrates Yeats's frustration and fear that everyone will continue to act in the same way even after constant demonstrations in their home countries and even after the poem warns them explicitly about the inevitability adversity. For example the term "halfpenny," is in literal terms half a penny, which implies that although society believes they are improving economically they are similar to that beggar that is still receiving half a penny because they do not dare ask for more. This in turn suggests that although individuals must be grateful, they must understand that at a certain point they must realize they cannot survive in their conditions. The description of receiving food also emphasizes the marginalization of impoverished individuals; this in turn further condemns them for being content with their situation. When they do refuse to advocate for

themselves, they will continue to be treated as less than human or as not equals to other individuals who possess higher socioeconomic statuses.

The description of receiving food also emphasizes the marginalization of impoverished individuals; this in turn further condemns them for being content with their situation. The term throwing implies that by being content with their unjust living conditions they are treated as if they are animals. This connotation of throwing food is one that is not colloquial, which in turn emphasizes the universality of this criticism and extends its application in order to become a criticism of society instead of a local community.

However, considering the fact that Yeats juxtaposes jargon in the third stanza, it can be implied that he is both criticizing society as a whole and his local community, and does not trust that with jargon the poem will not compel them to improve their situation. By doing so, Yeats's suggest that change must happen before the rest of the world notices their flaws, and or many before their flaws and idleness encourage others to adopt similar attitudes towards their lives. The terms "tossed a bare heel" and "old sock full," is jargon that denotes an impoverished individual and a wealthy one. Even though his jargon limits the scope of his critiques Yeats's last line always makes sure to expand these limits. The shift in diction from colloquial to jargon illustrates Yeats's frustration and fear that everyone will continue to act in the same way even after continual warning to change.

Yeats's symbolism aims to highlight the encourage individuals to seek for freedom because he suggests that there is little protection from adversity, especially if an individual is in a position that is better than most

socioeconomically. The symbol of wind in this poem serves to represent <https://assignbuster.com/yeatss-running-to-paradise-as-a-means-to-make-the-argument-for-humility/>

freedom, since the last stanza states that " my fancy" cannot be bought nor bound. This symbol is present in the beginning as well with the term Windy Gap, which refers to an inland between two hills. This inland between to hills is what Yeats refers to when he states that the protagonist does not want to be bound, therefore in order to counteract this the protagonist crosses this threshold in the very first line. The symbol of the wind is preceded by the symbol of the dog and the gun because they emphasize the ineffective nature of trying to protect society both through material means and through means other than the individuals' own. The symbol of a dog and a gun are methods by which many try to protect themselves from dangers or the unknown. However, Yeats suggest that both of these are useless since he states that even with these objects a king will always turn into a beggar. The fact that these are coined as useless is because Yeats's suggests that society's inability to reach paradise is because they believe that the physical world is the only aspect of their lives they must fix and protect themselves against, instead he suggests that it is more useful to protect society from becoming ignorant and idle. Yeats mocks society for trying to protect themselves from the physical world because he understands that the only way to truly protect themselves is to adopt a different mindset, and only after that strive to adopt a different lifestyle. The symbol of the salted fish combines the notions presented by both ideas of the previous symbols. The symbol of salted fish only appears once, however it suggest the broader message that even with money it is important to have some way to preserve morality and to understand that preserving a sense of humility is still necessary. Yeats's poem emphasizes the importance of striving for more,

however he also highlights that economic prosperity must always keep morals intact.

The cacophony that line D and that alludes to Mathew 10: 23-24 highlight the severity of the consequences that will result from ignoring the warning messages that Yeats embeds throughout the poem. "Running to Paradise" embeds the allusion of Mathew 10: 23-24 throughout the entire poem, where he emphasizes that it is almost impossible for the rich to enter heaven. This biblical verse states that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter heaven. Yeats references this allusion at the end of every stanza with the line: "And there the king is but as the beggar," after he previously describes his journey to heaven and how he believes heaven will be. This allusion serves to heighten the importance of line (D) as a warning, because it grounds the warning in religion, that of which incites fear to many individuals. Ending in mutes, creates a cacophony, which increases the condescending tone Yeats places on his reminder at the end of every stanza. This repetitive cacophony aids in creating the notion that the ending line (D) at the end of every stanza is a warning, that similar to the cacophony it creates, it will lead to an unpleasant and unsettling condition that no one will escape from. The repetition of line (D), makes sure that this warning incites fear because it is repeated until the end of the poem, thereby suggesting that there is no escape other than running to paradise. Inciting this fear, hopes to encourage individuals to pursue ideas and a condition beyond what they are living now, where the rich need to pursue new ideas overall and the poor need to strive to step out of their adversity.

The rhyme scheme and repetition of line B and line D, create a very insistent atmosphere, which furthers the fear that the cacophony already garners, in order to condemn individuals for their vulnerability to idleness. The overall meaning of lines B and D do not change, instead line B contains variations, which all end in the phrase running to paradise. The aspirate in the word paradise creates a euphony, which creates an encouraging mode, in other words it will propel individuals or society to be captivated by the sounds that come from aiming for something better. The repetition of line B of line B is central to the overall poem, as it is the line that contains the title of the poem however, the wording of the line changes throughout the text. Not only does this serve the purpose to keep sentences grammatically correct, it also serves to assure Yeats that his message will be carried out. The different variation of the phrase aid in providing the poem with different instances from which Yeats's criticisms can be captured, that of which cannot be done is the lines are exactly the same. The sudden detractions from the rhyme scheme serve, as warnings against falling into idleness while others are encouragements to begin taking responsibility for any situation and acting to fix it. The shifts in rhyme scheme such as in stanzas two and three where 2 lines disregard the rhyme scheme are held by the words gun and school, two words that are more so mute sounds that they are liquids or aspirates. This abrupt shift is a method to emphasize the relevance behind the symbolic meaning of the dog and the gun, and to direct the other line to a direct audience. This way there is no ambiguity as to which people Yeats's is trying to change, because it will be mostly those who understand the nuances of the symbols will that need to change their way of understanding a notion of fate. Yeats suggests that fate is not static and most certainly not definite, <https://assignbuster.com/yeatss-running-to-paradise-as-a-means-to-make-the-argument-for-humility/>

and for this reason there is no justification as to why individuals are not motivated to change their economic disposition and ideological mindset.

The Antimetabole and the title "Running to Paradise" finalize the notion that adversity makes no distinctions between those who are successful and unsuccessful because the type of success they have is more important than their success in itself. The antimetabole in lines 15-16, are variations of the same words that support each other in order to create a more concrete statement. The seriousness that follows these lines, it due to the fact that they seem to be repetitions of each other which is not the case here, but nonetheless this elevates its importance within the poem. Yeats's comparison between the lives of both kings and beggars emphasizes the notion that his criticism of society's idleness and refutes the notion that economic success is good above all other success. This is because an individual who is successful in only material wealth is similar to a beggar because they are more prone to be beggars to try to acquire acceptance from others. The title Running to Paradise foreshadows the possible condescending attitude that Yeats will employ when describing the places or even the people that he will be leaving, which is exactly what he does because he describes makes mention of many useless actions they carry forth in order to save their material successes, however because they do not help others achieve a better economic situation, in a paradise they will be prone to being treated as beggars who will beg to once again live in a paradise. The attitude, or tone, that Yeats adopts starts as an apathetic tone, transitions into an admonishing tone and ends lastly with an insistent tone, in order to emulate the transitions that Yeats believes his society must follow in

order to restore their morality while simultaneously improving their living conditions.

The motif of a beggar is also very prevalent throughout the poem, which furthers the notion that even a king can become a beggar. This first stanza suggest that the beggar is unaware or is ignore of his or her situation, because they are not surprised by the treatment they receive from others, such as when they are thrown fish instead of simply being given. The two middle stanzas aim to warn against the further deterioration of society by providing two examples that outline a man's downfall, or in the very least allude to how difficult it will be later on to redeem themselves in front of a higher power. Lastly, Yeats's motif of wind in the last stanza finalizes the poem with an insisting tone, because Yeats focuses on the sense of freedom that will come from abiding from his warnings, and mostly to insist that an attempt at self advocacy is better than nothing, because even people in the highest socioeconomic position can fall, and most often they are the ones who suffer most during their downfall because they are unwilling to accept it and because they experience the most change in the shortest amount of time. Therefore, individuals must be mentally or physically ready to endure at the very least slight hardship.

Yeats suggest that individuals, especially those who have already achieved an economic and or an moral high ground must work with individuals who have not yet achieves either, because not doing so will reduce them to beggars if they look forward to an afterlife or if they simply wish to better their living conditions. Success must therefore be seen as a tool to help others and to understand how to help others effectively, and in turn preserve

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the humility that an individual must have in order to be an influential member of society.