



University of Tikrit  
College of Education for Women  
English Department

Subject

**WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS**

**Sailing to Byzantium**

**The Lake Isle of Innisfree**

Fourth Stage

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# W. B. Yeats (1865-1939)

## The poetry of W B Yeats -- an Irish Poet

- 1- W. B. Yeats can be considered a poet of vision. He *is a moral poet. The moral lesson is very important in his poems since his moral vision brings from his religious viewpoints (mystic poet)*. Yeats is a mystic and symbolist where verse ranges from pure romantic melody. In his poems, Mysticism is a mixture of symbolism and occultism (belief in the supposed supernatural). It comes as an influence of Islamic Sufism and Indian mysticism. In his writing, Yeats searches for a mystical order to master the whole world.
- 2- Yeats believes in power and art. He thinks that art and poetry can enable the poet to create another reality, or a bitter reality in order to escape from the difficulties of harsh life.
- 3- The language used in Yeats' poems is very interested, simple, and direct language. And this is resulted from the romantic spirit in his poem. However, his poetry reflects a valuation of form, meter, and rhythm.
- 4- Irish nationalism, Irish folklore, Irish Revolution, happiness, death, life, the meaning of love, and the power of art—are the most important themes in his poems.

## "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  
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.

**"Sailing to Byzantium"** is a poem by W.B. Yeats

-It explores themes of aging, mortality, and the quest for transcendence.

The speaker expresses a sense of weariness with the physical world and the inevitable decline of the body with age. He sees the natural world as insufficient for the needs of the soul.

-The speaker seeks a way to escape the limitations of the material world.

He imagines a journey to Byzantium as a metaphor for a spiritual or artistic transformation, a departure from the constraints of mortality. Yeats emphasizes the idea of creating lasting art as a means of transcending the limitations of the physical body .

-Byzantium represents a place of timeless art and culture. The speaker desires to be part of a world where art and intellect are revered, seeking a spiritual rebirth in this idealized, transcendent realm.

-The poem contrasts the decaying natural world with the idea of a golden, immortal realm of art. It reflects Yeats's belief in the transformative power of artistic creation. The poem is a poignant exploration of the human condition, the desire for immortality through artistic creation.

The poem is written in a **traditional Poetic Form** of poetry known as ottava rima which is a stanzaic form, consisting of eight lines, typically written in iambic pentameter. The rhyme scheme is usually abababcc. This poetic form contributes to the poem's musicality and rhythmic quality, aligning with the elevated and contemplative tone of the speaker as he reflects on themes of aging, art, and transcendence.

**Symbolism and Imagery:** Yeats employs rich and symbolic imagery throughout the poem. Byzantium serves as a symbol of eternal art and culture, while the "sages" and "dying generations" symbolize the transience of human life.

### **The Lake Isle of Innisfree**

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core

- **Poetic form** : Quatrain Stanzas: The poem consists of three quatrains (four-line stanzas), contributing to its concise and rhythmic structure. Yeats uses clear and straightforward language, contributing to the accessibility of the poem. This simplicity enhances the overall sense of yearning for a more uncomplicated life. The poem is a lyric one. It is a twelve-line poem divided into three stanzas, each stanza consists of four lines .It is an attempt to create an Irish form of poetry with some indirect mysticism . It represents an emotional and spiritual escape rather than an actual life or physical world. The poem

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Yeats

shows how simple use of language can achieve musical effects. The images are a mixture of poetic description of a beautiful place of realistic to life images (actual life).

- The **poem reflects Yeats's longing for a simple, natural life** away from the hustle and bustle of urban existence. The isle of Innisfree represents a place of tranquility and solitude.

- Yeats **expresses a desire to escape** the noise and stress of city life, seeking refuge in the peaceful and idyllic surroundings of Innisfree.

- The poem **celebrates a connection to nature**, emphasizing the desire to live in harmony with the natural world. This theme aligns with the broader literary movement of the time, including elements of Romanticism.

## **The Meaning of the Poem**

### **1st stanza**

The speaker imagines building a small cottage, having beans and honey, escaping from the life of London city, and living alone in a solitary life in the island of Innisfree (indirect mystical journey)

### **2nd Stanza**

The speaker suggests to find the peace among the natural imagery environment there, living a delightful climate life of the morning and noon times with the listening to song-bird and insects. (Beautiful places and wonderful light and colour)

### **3rd Stanza**

The speaker celebrates the imaginary private place, comparing between urban and rural life, claiming that he was the only one who can hear the sound of beautiful lake water as it is the deep heart's core for his sense.