

Topic: Sailing to Byzantium: W.B. Yeats (Explanation)

* 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 our soul
Consume my hearts away; silt with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is, and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

Explanation:- The above lines have been taken from 'Sailing to Byzantium' the first poem of the ~~poem~~ volume entitled 'The Tower' written by W.B. Yeats. Byzantium is historically a city which merged in Constantinople, it was the Capital of the Roman Empire and was famous for its magnificence advancement of civilization and culture, and above all for arts.

For W.B. Yeats, Byzantium has become for him a Utopia, it is to his world that he wants to sail. Yeats says that as ~~the~~^{an} old man prays to the sages, who

really stand in God's holy fire. ² But
the poet compares the great artist with
sages and visualizes the great artist as
~~being~~ standing in holy fire as gold
mosaics and thus undergoing a process of
purification. The poet also wants his heart
to be filled with heavenly music, so he
requested to them to come down from that
holy fire, rapidly, moving in spinning motion
and to teach his soul to sing with artistic
pleasure, because his heart is sick
with desire and his desire has fastened
him to a dying animal. Here the poet
refers to his own old physical body as
dying animal and he wants to purify
his heart of all sensual pleasures, for
he is no more in a physical condition
to enjoy the pleasures of the senses. He
therefore request the sages to consume his
sick heart and purged it, to instruct his
soul and gather him into the orbice of eternity.

These lines reflect Yeats's leaning
towards the Theosophists. But at the same
time we see a conflict between heart
and the head. He wants to purify his
heart of ~~all~~ all sensual pleasures,
because his conscience does not allow it.
and so he want to purge ~~all~~ his heart
of all the passion and become a part of
the immortal products of art.