Old Age and Mortality This poem is, at least in part, about the difficulties of old age.But, as the speaker hints when he calls the singing birds "those dying generations" and observes that the happy young "neglect / Monuments of unageing intellect," this world is also limited by its inability to accept the realities of aging. That is, the young are so self-absorbed, so wrapped up in these physical, bodily delights, that they can't yet appreciate their own mortality, and certainly can't achieve the kind of spiritual transcendence the speaker longs for. Indeed, an old man with a failing body can't even pretend to fit in there. The poem's very first line, "That is no country for old men," lets readers know that the speaker is totally at odds with this world.Because there is no "singing school," however, no one to teach the speaker's soul how to achieve such vibrancy, the speaker makes an imagined spiritual journey to the long-lost holy city of Byzantium. He's making this journey with his mind, not his body; he envisions leaving the body behind forever, in fact, and the power of his imagination helps him to move beyond his physical frailty. This again emphasizes the separation between the speaker's mortal body and his transcendent soul. Byzantium ceased to exist long ago (it is now modern-day Istanbul), and the "sages," or wise men, the speaker reaches out to are actually mosaics--real, famous artworks crafted from many tiny, often gilded (gold-covered) tiles.Even the word "that" separates the speaker from the country: it's something over there, something he doesn't belong to. The speaker then focuses on the failures of his aging body, which he describes as "a tattered coat": not the substance of his real self, but just a garment he's wearing. The only way to salvage such a garment, in turn, is for the soul to "clap its hands and sing."The world is described through images of natural fertility and bounty: young people embracing, .singing birds, vast schools of fish

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