

Manifestation of unrequited love in yeats' poetical creations

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Abstract

The present paper purports Maud Gonne as Yeats' unrequited love and the Muse to his poetry. He had tried to seek her love repeatedly but he failed every time. His poetical creations have become the way to speak about his unrequited love as well as inspiration to his initial poetry. The researcher has made an attempt to find the influence and presence of unrequited love in Yeats' literary creations. He made all the efforts to seek his love throughout his life but it was useless and futile. Most of his poems contain direct and indirect reference of Maud Gonne. In brief, Maud has immense significance in Yeats' literary creations.

Keywords: unrequited, love, presence, literary creations, significance

Introduction

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) was an Irish poet, the prominent figure of twentieth century and the founder of 'Abbey Theatre'. He was a driving force of Irish Literary Revival. Yeats was fascinated by both Irish Legends and Occult from an early age. He was honoured with the Nobel Prize in literature in 1923 and became the first Irishman who is labelled with 'inspired poetry'. There have always been external forces that may lead an author to motivate to write literary compositions. Maud Gonne, one of the external forces, encouraged Yeats to write initial verses. Maud Gonne was a versatile actress and Irish Nationalist of twentieth century. Yeats had been infatuated by Maud Gonne. Yeats proposed Maud first in 1891 but was rejected by her badly. Yeats failed to seek Maud's love repeatedly. She married Major John McBride but he was obnoxious to Maud and her daughter Iseult Gonne. Due to such abusive behaviour Maud divorced McBride. Even after divorce Yeats proposed Maud and again he was disappointed. In short, Maud Gonne had remained 'unrequited love' of Yeats throughout his life.

Unrequited Love in Yeats Poetical Creations

"Life is a long preparation for something that never happens." -W. B. Yeats

This quote signifies Yeats' struggle to achieve his dreams in his life. Yeats' one of the aims is to seek love of Maud Gonne but unfortunately it was unfulfilled. The subsequent poetical compositions indicate the reference of Yeats' unrequited love and his Muse to the poetry – Maud Gonne.

The poetical creation *Her Praise* is based on the first love of the poet- Maud Gonne, the Irish actress and Revolutionist of the time. The poet admired her most but people used to talk less about her and opposed her. Therefore the poet does not want to be in relation with such people. He wants only to be in contact with those who praise her. They may be beggars and poor people. It is the moral duty of the reader to identify Maud's place in the poet's life and how she is the Muse for him.

The phenomenal poem *His Phoenix* reflects Maud Gonne along with other beauties from the world. 'Phoenix' is used

symbolically and stands for Maud Gonne, the prime affection of Yeats. 'Phoenix', the mythological bird, lives for five to six centuries in the Arabian Desert and on funeral pyre got burned and resurrects with the new life. 'Phoenix' symbolizes Maud Gonne being unique and passionate love of the poet. Leda, the most beautiful woman and the mythical character occurs in the poem. Zeus, the Greek God molested Leda and she bore a girl child Helen, the matchless beauty of the world and the cause of the downfall of Troy. Other beautiful women are also mentioned of Yeats' time in the poem like Gaby Deslys, Ruth St. Denis, Pavlova, Margaret, Marjorie, Dorothy, Nan, Dephne and Mary. Thus, some more contemporary beauties are described in the poem. But Yeats called them all barbarous crowd as he was rejected so many times by Maud Gonne. Each stanza of the poem ends with the line *"I knew a phoenix in my youth, so let them have their day"*. It indicates the poet's love for Maud Gonne.

The poem *The People* has the personal allusion of Maud Gonne, the Irish Revolutionist and Yeats' unrequited love. She was tried to convince not to marry MacBride but he failed to persuade her. The allusion of 'Ferrara Wall', from Italy, is occurred in the poem and it was erected to protect the city. It is the oldest wall. It denotes that the love of Yeats is similar to the wall. In short, this poem has influence of Maud on Yeats.

The continual thought of Maud Gonne results in the poem *A Thought from Propertius*, also inspired by Propertius, the notable and famed Roman elegiac poet. Maud, being the unfulfilled love of Yeats, disturbed the poet throughout his life. Similarly Propertius became fond of the heroine of his poetical world 'Cynthia'. There is no one to match her beauty like Yeats' Maud Gonne. Even there is no match between the Greek Goddess of wisdom and literature, Athenae. Thus, Maud Gonne was everything for Yeats.

The poem entitled *Broken Dreams* depicts Maud Gonne, the unrequited dream of the poet. He proposed Maud but failed to seek her love. Though she became the driving force for Yeats' poetry, she did not understand and respond his love. Being in her middle age, no one gets baffled due to her presence as it used to happen in her young beauty. The

poet's memories are vague because he failed to convince Maud Gonne. The poem has lamenting tone of unfulfilled and broken dreams. Although Maud is aged, she was loved and accepted as she was the Muse for the poet. Through the line "*Vague memories, nothing but memories*" the reader can identify how the poet had bitter memories due to Maud's denial of Yeats' love. Consequently, one can observe Maud's presence in this poem.

A Deep-Sworn Vow depicts the life-long fascination of the poet – Maud Gonne. True love can never be forgotten as the poet met 'your face' – Maud Gonne. This shortest poem has also the adaptation of Yeats love and inspiration of his writing Maud Gonne. Iseult Gonne was the daughter of Maud Gonne, the passion of Yeats for some time. Iseult, the living beauty, was proposed by Yeats and as her mother she also rejected his proposal. The poet rightly said that she was a young and energetic beauty as compared to him. The poet was becoming the old day-by-day. He accepted his contentment and clearly stated that such living beauty is for the young people and not for the person like him. The poet states "*O heart, we are old; / the living beauty is for younger men*" to show the strength of being young. This poem can be fully justified only when the personal references from the poet's life is considered. The fact is accepted by the poet and signifies to come back from dreams to the reality through the poem *The Living Beauty*.

The verse composition *The Cat and the Moon* represents the detachment between the cat and the moon. Here the cat symbolizes Yeats and the moon most probably implies Maud Gonne. The moon is white whereas the cat, named 'Black Minnaloushe' is black. Maud Gonne denied Yeats' love. The resemblance between the cat and the moon is transition as the moon turns the shape throughout its phases from circular to crescent whereas the cat's eyes turns "*from round to crescent / from crescent to round*". It signifies that though there is a difference between both, they have certain resemblance. The line "*Tired of that courtly fashion*" conveys his frustration due to Maud's refusals and finally accepts the reality. In brief, the poem needs Maud's consideration while deducing its meaning.

The poem *No Second Troy* refers to the inimitable beauty of the time – Helen and the disaster she caused. The poem indirectly ventilates the poet's deep agony of heart at the marriage of Maude Gonne with Major MacBride in 1903. It has also the interconnection between the political turmoil in Ireland and the inappropriate treatment given by the British to Ireland. It must also be noticed that Maud was also the Irish revolutionist. To sum up this one can observe the place of Maud in Yeats life.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Yeats' unrequited love is reflected in his poetical creations. Maud Gonne had never accepted Yeats' love hence it remained unrequited love for Yeats. Yeats chose Maud as a Muse to him. She ignited Yeats to compose his earlier poetical creations. Such poems directly or indirectly have the reference of Maud Gonne. Maud Gonne is ubiquitous in Yeats poetical creations.

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