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W. B YEATS AS A VECTOR TO CIRCUMSCRIBE FEMALE'S DUE PROFESSIONAL, PHYSICAL, AND INTELLECTUAL CAPACITY

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ABSTRACT

One of the best poets of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, W.B. Yeats is still praised in today's pragmatic and technological society. Among the literary figures of his time, he held a prominent position. There is a wide debate going on whether women's position was marred by either the Victorian men and writers together, or by the modern poets who turned against women's actual position and misinterpreted their due intellectual power and social standing. W.B. Yeats seems to be hitting the intermediate position, partly remains under the influence of Maud Gonne where he swings from appreciating her to an implicitly deprecating criticism on her beauty and mannerisms.

One of the most well-known poets of all time is W. B. Yeats. He has composed poetry on a variety of subjects, including the depiction of women, in which he expresses his attitude toward women. Yeats also thinks of women in both the ways resolving which is difficult, similar to the Western tradition, according to Eagleton (1985), where women are considered an oxymoron, having both negative and good attitude like devil and saints, beast and angel. It's difficult to comprehend his attitude toward women. In addition to loving ladies, he loved

his nation. Three poems by Yeats—"No Second Troy" (1908), "A Prayer for My Daughter" (1919), and "Easter, 1916" (1916)—have been chosen for consideration in this research. In some ways, each of these poems reflects the limitations placed on female potential and critiques of women's attractiveness. One of Yeats's poems that is frequently recited is "No Second Troy." In this poem, he vents his anger at his beloved Maud Gonne for encouraging violence in the Irish Independence Movement. He also mocks Gonne's attractiveness and her out-of-date aristocratic standards for the time in which she lives. He also talks about women and how the exuberance of beauty has come under fire in "A Prayer for My Daughter." Yeats asks that his daughter not grow too beautiful lest she encounter troubles in the future. He worries that her extreme attractiveness will give others who see her a terrifying appearance. The way Yeats longs for his daughter's beauty and nature to be limited indicates that he confines women to femininity. Yeats criticises women and their growing voices in "Easter, 1916." It offends him, in his opinion. The three poems' treatment of women has been explored in the part that follows.

This research probes into questions like: What are the issues where Yeats seems to be partial towards women's due acclaim? and does Yeats' attitude towards women and especially Maud Gonne influence women's entry into main domains? probe into these questions allow the researchers to highlight the issues where Yeats seems to be partial towards women's due acclaim, and determines the extent of Yeats' attitude towards women and especially Maud Gonne influence women's entry into main domains.

The *Subjection of Women* (1861), in which Stuart Mill critiques the "legal subjection of one sex to the other," is a source of inspiration for this essay. He is a proponent of gender equality for both men and women. According to him, this "subordination" is "bad in itself" and hinders "human growth." He seeks a "principle" that would ensure that both sexes had equal "social status" and that no one sex was given preference or privilege over the other (p.7). Additionally, Mill addresses how patriarchal society and men limit the abilities and possibilities of women. The three Yeats poems listed below can be understood better with the aid of Mill's writing. The essay's main subject is "No Second Troy" (1908). The essay examines the other two poems, "A Prayer for My Daughter" (1919) and "Easter, 1916" (1916), in addition to "No Second Troy," to show how Yeats limits the potential of the female.

In "No Second Troy," Yeats does not specifically mention Gonne by name, but he opens with the words "Why should I blame her because she filled my days/ With agony" (1-2). In a hazy way, these sentences are suggestive of Maud Gonne, his lover. This poem has some expressions of Yeats's loveless life. According to Brian Arkin (2011), Yeats' failure in love with Maud Gonne had an impact on his poetry career. After being finally rejected by her, he created significantly less "lyrical poetry" than anticipated. Numerous reviewers and readers have interpreted "No Second Troy" as a love song that also contains a light parody on Maud Gonne's character. According to John Unterecker's analysis of "No Second Troy" in *A Reader's Guide to W.B. Yeats*, the poem is mostly about admiring Maud Gonne's beauty. He claims that she is compared to the Trojan War heroine Helen in terms of beauty (Unterecker, 1965). There

are hints in the poem that suggest it is a parody on Maud Gonne's masculine and forceful attitude, despite critics' claims that "No Second Troy" is primarily directed at her beauty.

Early versions of some of his love poems express adoration for Maud Gonne's character and attractiveness. In addition, he demonstrates complete submission to his beloved in these verses. We find the words "I have spread my dreams under your feet;/ Tread softly because you tread on my dreams" in the 1889 poem "He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven." These lines show Yeats praising his beloved and demonstrating his metaphorical submission to her. However, he portrays Maud Gonne in his poems, which appeared sometime between 1908 and 1921, in a critical light, frequently criticizing her beauty and attitude. He may have written 'No Second Troy' and 'A Prayer for My Daughter' in response to Maud Gonne rejecting his frequent offers. In actuality, 'A Prayer for My Daughter' came out soon after he was finally turned down. Prior to Maud Gonne and Sean MacBride's marriage, we see a love-sick Yeats, and after their union, we see a love-sick Yeats. According to some authors, Yeats was so enamoured with Maud Gonne's beauty that he even asked her daughter, Iseult Gonne, to marry him. Martin maintains that "No Second Troy" paints a completely different picture from what his other love poems are, and that it is here that Yeats's "assertive voice" and combative tone are expressed. No Second Try, according to Martin, "is the combination of the public and [Yeats'] private existence." There is "his own lengthy relationship with Gonne" on one side, and "the blazing city" is seen on the other. The "Petrarchan object for masculine desire" and the "spark for teaching violence to the commoners" are Maud Gonne (Martin, 2002).

No Second Troy, according to Martin's argument, is Yeats' disdain of her personality as well as his statement of resentment over her marriage to MacBride. Martin adds an autobiographical element to it. His description of her as a "Petrarchan Object," however, seems to diminish her worth to that of a sexual catharsis object for a male. Yeats may have wanted this all along.

Although Maud Gonne had already broken up with MacBride by the time Yeats composed this poem, he was still disappointed with her marriage to him. The poem demonstrates his frustration with her macho demeanour. She is compared to a "tightened bow," a type of beauty that is inappropriate for the time she is living in. It demonstrates how Yeats disparages her manliness in "No Second Troy." In "No Second Troy," he used the following verses to describe her beauty.

With beauty like a tightened bow, a kind That is not natural in this age' (p. 8-9).

But Yeats' early life demonstrates that he admired Maud Gonne's masculinity. It is difficult to comprehend what led Yeats to accuse her of using violence and to disparage her for having mannish characteristics. Yeats believes that Gonne's aggressive demeanour and her aristocratic values in "No Second Troy" are out of place in today's pragmatic society. The aesthetic sensibility of Yeats and his followers turns into a curse. The Irish are the victims of their irrational zeal, just

like the Greeks who were seduced by Helen's beauty and threw themselves into the fire of battle.

Although it is inappropriate for her age, the tragic grandeur in her personality belies her attractiveness. He accuses Maud Gonne of encouraging the whole Irish populace to contribute to Ireland's instability. By nature, W.B. Yeats was a pacifist. He didn't want Maud Gonne and her allies' promotion of aggressive tactics to shock Ireland in any manner. He had faith that Ireland would one day rise to greatness in peace. He was disappointed by the dreams he had held for Ireland's future in his early poetry, nevertheless, by the end of his poetic career. In his book *Yeats and the Heroic Ideal*, Zwerdling (1965) notes that Yeats frequently mocks his earlier idealistic dreams for the future greatness of Ireland in his later poetry. Zwerdling's assertion suggests that Yeats disapproved of the use of any barbarism or irrational heroism in the pursuit of independence or the overthrow of the British Empire. Yeats was undoubtedly a nationalist and had some political interest in his youth.

Yeats, however, opposed women interfering with the dominance of men. He limits women's potential to what they can do as women.

No Second Troy is a satire on women that downplays and minimizes their strong personalities. Yeats believed that man's possessions were power and authority. Yeats admired Maud Gonne's masculinity, but he also wanted her to have a balance of feminine and masculine characteristics.

The poems of Yeats reveal that Gonne lacked the typical feminine traits. Yeats thought that women should only adopt a manly attitude that appeals to males. He expressed his own sexual attraction to Maud Gonne's masculine traits in some of his poems, praising them in considerable detail. Yeats, according to Wilson, was always drawn to the masculine features of Maud Gonne, but his marriage to MacBride turned him into a "semi-sadistic" and cruel person. Yeats and Maud Gonne were more separated from one another.

They also started to dislike one another (Wilson, 1972). Wilson's theory is supported by Sook, who emphasises that women should be sexually appealing, have manners and wit, and should have "no intellectual anger." In Yeats' poetry, the persona "blames the women for their aggression" (Sook, 2006). Wilson and Sook's earlier remarks offer convincing proof that Yeats grew dissatisfied with Maud Gonne's manliness. Additionally, he had sexual cravings, and the fact that he wasn't able to have sex with Maud Gonne may have caused him to be rude to her. Yeats thought that women should provide for the sensual needs of males. In her book, *Gender and History in Yeats' Love Poetry*, Cullingford claims that males in Yeats's day were afraid that if women who had been oppressed by the patriarchal society were to benefit from freedom, they may initiate retaliatory oppression against their male counterpart (Butler, 1996). In the early decades of the 20th century, this was the predominant male fear. It indicates that Yeats despises women's power. In other words, one may argue that Yeats restrains their (females') progress toward the patriarchal system. Such satirical hints can also be found in "Easter, 1916."

In a time that is intolerant of the strident voice of women, Yeats criticizes the growing voice of women. The following passages from "Easter, 1916" demonstrate his mockery on the role played by women in the movement to overthrow English control in Ireland. That woman spent her days being naive and her nights arguing.

Until her voice grew shrill.(p.17-20)

In this poem, Yeats treats the women negatively. According to him, women should speak softly and be attractive enough to draw the attention of males. Because this influence distorts their femininity, he dislikes their meddling in political campaigns. Yeats restricts women to certain particular gender roles as a result. Men preserve their [women's] subordination by adhering to "women's infirmities," in Mill's opinion, since "the preponderance of male sex does not accept" the idea of "living with an equal" (Mill, 1986, p. 53). Despite the fact that the women's strategy to carry out the revolutionary campaign was faulty, the word "ignorance" in this context implies that Yeats mocks the ignorance of women. In other words, he is making fun of women's intellectual frailty by using the word "ignorance" in the sentences above. We can conclude that Yeats believed women to be intellectually inferior. Yeats emphasizes the need for women to speak quietly. Their agile actions are merely incursions on private property.

As Mill notes in *The Subjection of Women*, certain women cry up vehemently in favour of their "suffrage" in parliament, led by "the most prominent woman" (Mill, 1986, p. 19). Yeats likely opposes a woman having a dominant role that jeopardizes a man's dominance. The statement Mill made regarding women's suffrage can be applied to Maud Gonne and Constance Markievicz, who inspired other women to fight for their freedom from patriarchal oppression. Yeats disliked how women were treated in politics, as was stated elsewhere in the essay. He expresses his unhappiness with the uprising that the rebels started in "Easter, 1916."

The words "Too lengthy a sacrifice/ Can turn the heart to stone." (57–58) demonstrate how Yeats converts their hearts to a stone devoid of feeling or love but possessing a recurring desire. Maud Gonne's excessive service to the revolutionary ideas is the sacrifice. The stone was a representation of how politics had impacted Maud Gonne in particular, according to Jeffares (Jeffares, 1971).

In "Easter, 1916," Yeats does not just feminize the female characters; he also does the same for the masculine ones. He utilizes the persona of MacDonagh to extol his peculiarly feminine traits. He may have achieved stardom in the end.

Given how sensitive he appeared,
So daring and sweet his thought. (p.28-31)

These lines show that Yeats praises both the composition of masculine and feminine features in males as well as the embodiment of these traits in girls. Yeats feminizes MacDonagh's masculinity by using the words "tender" and

"sweet mind," which are terms that denote femininity. This shows that Yeats appreciates both a person's male and female characteristics.

Yeats might have felt less capable than Gonne because he lacked some of her characteristics, and he might have wished he had them. In a book review by Cullingford, Alison notes that "[Yeats] himself had great difficulty in becoming a man." During the crisis of gender relations, he inherited the traditions of love poetry that was predominately written by men. At the time he wrote, "the position of women" as "uneducated and without franchise" was under attack (Allison, 1997).

Therefore, it can be asserted with confidence that Yeats yearned for the characteristics he observed in Maud Gonne in himself. In *Profiles in Literature* (1971), Jeffares distinguishes the characteristics of Yeats and Maud Gonne, stating that while Yeats was timid, fragile, and poor, Gonne was full of self-confidence, energetic, and independence. His impression of her beauty, height, and ability to command audiences was that she was highly distinguished, with a face resembling a Greek statue.

Yeats lacked confidence, although Maud did. Yeats found her personality to be admirable. However, he might have been critical of Maud Gonne's features if he had been unable to imitate her or her features. Yes, it is true that he fell in love with her because of the attributes that he found so fascinating about her, but it may also be claimed that he ignores these virtues because they are harmful to the present world. He likens Helen, the Trojan War heroine whose beauty sparked Troy's destruction, to her beauty. He dislikes certain aspects of Maud Gonne's personality because of this.

The elegance and beauty of her figure made Yeats wretched, and in "No Second Troy," he casts his own unhappiness onto the future of Ireland. All of this discussion implies that men's ability to think critically is corrupted by women's beauty, which has a destructive character. Yeats turns a woman's beauty's potential into devastating force. Yeats' famed contemporary Bernard Shaw also refers to women as "Boa constrictors," saying they prevent a man from becoming a superhuman (Shawn, 2008).

Yeats agrees with those who criticize women's excess attractiveness. The exuberance of beauty has also been criticized in "A Prayer for My Daughter," although not as much as this beauty. Yeats asks that his daughter not grow too beautiful lest she encounter troubles in the future. He worries that her extreme attractiveness will give off a terrifying aura to everybody who sees her.

The way Yeats longs for his daughter's beauty and nature to be limited indicates that he confines women to femininity. It may be argued that he is behaving patriarchally. Yeats even deprives his daughter of her feminine beauty by wishing for her to have beauty but refraining from being too made lovely. (17-18). According to Yeats, excessive female beauty breeds pride, which develops into intellectual hatred.

He writes, "An intellectual hatred is the worse, /So let her think thoughts are accursed," to convey intellectual hatred (57-58). They are opinionated and judgmentally incompetent due to their arrogance and intellectual hostility. In the lines that follow, Yeats insinuates that Maud Gonne made a mistake in picking MacBride as her life mate. He claims,

While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man. (p.27-29).

The above lyrics have allusions to mythology and imply that Yeats is mocking Maud Gonne for choosing to wed MacBride. His implicit belief in a man's intellectual superiority over a woman may be described by the phrase "Being fatherless could have her way" in the sentence above. According to Albright's notes on this poem,

'Fatherless: possibly a covert implication that only a father's guidance can keep a daughter from making the wrong decision (p.623). Albright's remarks can be understood in the context of an authoritative guy who blocks any intellectual illumination aimed at a woman. To put it another way, we could say that Yeats's own male chauvinism is what causes him to belittle the overwhelming beauty or intellectual strength of women. Yeats held a conventional view that women are less intelligent than males. Yeats' viewpoint is physical as well, presuming that women are inferior to men in terms of biology.

In *The Subjection of Women*, Stuart Mill opposes the anatomical presumption that each sex possesses equal intellectual potential, which anatomy attempts to show by claiming that a man's brain is larger than that of a woman. "The bigger the brain, the more intellectual power there is" (Mills, 1986).

Another point is made when he says, "And may her bridegroom bring her to a house/ Where all's customary, ceremonial," in the final line (p.73-74). He wants his daughter to marry an aristocratic person so that she can rely on her wealthy husband. In other words, he limits his daughter's potential and confines her to a woman sitting inside the set parameters of the house. Considering how little of a role an aristocratic husband would play in his life.

Yeats brings to mind the Victorian aristocratic norms of the 19th century, where a woman is treated like an object.

Yeats, like the Pre-Raphaelites in his and his father's milieu, according to Ramazani (1993), "was fascinated with the icon of the disempowered women." Yeats, like other male poets, resorted to the "aesthetic representation" of women in his poems when he began to feel as though he might lose "social control" over the ladies in his immediate vicinity. Around him, he builds the antithesis of "unmasterable women." (Ramazani, 1993, p.67).

Therefore, the new woman he invents in his poetry would be a made-up character who is simple to control. Because Maud Gonne's beauty penetrates so deeply, Yeats finds it impossible to ignore it in his poetry and daily life.

Ramazani contends that Yeats was yet terrified of being subdued by the domineering woman. The prospect that Yeats' praise of her attractiveness could mutate into an ironic parody of her beauty, poise, and severe demeanour is reflected in the poem "No Second Troy." Yeats continues the sarcasm when he states the poem's conclusion:

Being high and solitary and most stern?
Why, what could she have done, being what she is?
Was there another Troy for her to burn? (p.10-12)

Yeats describes her as "solitary and most stern," two terms that imply masculinity. The movie "Solitary" demonstrates a woman's independent nature, and this independence is criticized since it causes patriarchal dominance to wane. Yeats wishes to rule out the idea of both genders achieving equal social position and power because the enervation of patriarchal power blurs the boundary between man and woman's social power.

He desires to feminize the gender of women. Her unyielding ego, which never bowed to the poet's sedulous requests, is what is meant by the word "stern." The metaphorical comparison of Maud Gonne's beauty to a "tightened bow" (p.9) refers to the Greek ideal of chivalry. Then it stands for the strength and bravery of men. Yeats becomes increasingly skeptical of masculinity and bravery for destroying the essence of femininity. The dominant personality of women bothers him. Women, for Yeats, should be polite, cordial, and sexually attractive, as was stated earlier in the essay. This demonstrates that despite the abundance of praise for women's personalities in Yeats' poetry, he is intolerant of their supremacy and views them as the tools for sexual fulfillment.

Finally, we can claim that Yeats' poetry alternates between praising and criticizing women. On the one hand, Maud Gonne's personality is praised, and on the other, her appearance is openly criticized. We may therefore conclude from these three poems that Yeats not only limits the potential of women but also strives to create a tiny window of opportunity for their advancement along his meticulously drawn lines.

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