The Representation of Woman in the Poetry of William Butler Yeats

Šimičević, Matea

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Odjel za anglistiku

Preddiplomski svučilišni studij engleskog jezika i književnosti (dvopredmetni)

Matea Šimičević

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The Representation of Women in the Poetry of William Butler Yeats

Završni rad

Student/ica:

Matea Šimičević

Mentor/ica:

Doc. dr. sc. Vesna Ukić Košta

Zadar. 2016

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PRIKAZ ŽENE U POEZIJI WILLIAMA BUTLERA YEATSA

Sažetak:

Ovaj rad bavi se prikazom žena u poeziji Williama Butlera Yeatsa. Rad analizira načine na koje je W. B. Yeats prikazivao žene; Irsku kao ženu, ženu koju je volio (Maud Gonne), ženu prikazana kroz simbol ruže, žene općenito itd. Rad se ponajviše fokusira na pjesme u kojima Yeats iskazuje ljubav prema Maud Gonne kao svoju vječnu inspiraciju.

Ključne riječi: poezija, W.B. Yeats, žena, Maud Gonne, ruža

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Abstract:

This paper deals with the representation of women in the poetry of William Butler Yeats. The paper tries to demonstrate ways in which W.B. Yeats conveyed women; woman as Ireland, the woman he loves (Maud Gonne), woman through the symbol of the rose, women in general etc. The paper mostly focuses on the poems in which Yeats's expresses his love towards Maud Gonne who was his everlasting inspiration.

Key words: poetry, W.B. Yeats, woman, Maud Gonne, rose

1. INTRODUCTION

Through many centuries, Irish identity was determined and shaped by someone else, in most cases England. David Cairns and Shaun Richards argue that "the historic relationship of Ireland with England is a relationship of the colonized and the colonizer“ (1). British colonization of Ireland began in the 12th century and lasted until the early 1920s, or more precisely, until the Civil War[1]. Of course, the root of a complicated relationship between Ireland and England goes far back into the past, in 1171 when England conquered independent Ireland (Bilandzic, 135). Problems that the Irish as a nation were facing developed through three basic stages; the first stage refers to the period from 1171 to 1921 when Ireland tried to secure her independence from England. The second stage began in 1921 when the Irish island was divided into two parts; Irish Free State, later known as Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The third contemporary stage with its beginning in 1969 refers to the relationship between two entities in Northern Ireland; protestant and catholic.

Act of Union in 1800 was never accepted by most Irish people because they considered it to be nothing more than a religious repression, economic exploitation as well as cultural superiority of England over Ireland. According to Mirko Bilandzic, in January 1913 Ulster Volunteer Force – UVF was formed with a goal to disable establishment of self-government with a help of weapons. Nine months later, as an answer to UVF's violence, Irish Volunteers were established later known as Irish Republican Army – IRA (136). In April 1916 they launched a very important move called Easter Rising proclaiming Irish Republic. Yeats supported this and other movements for independent Ireland.

[1]The Irish Civil War began in June 28th 1922 and lasted up to May 24th 1923. "Following the Irish War of Independence (1919–21) and subsequent Anglo-Irish Treaty Ireland‘s previously united nationalist movement fractured into opposing factions. The ensuing Civil War, fought between the Government and the anti-treatyite militants, known as the Irregulars, played an integral role in the development of the modern Irish State". (Breen T. Murphy : 1)

William Butler Yeats, was born in 1865 in Sandymount, Ireland. Since Yeats's family lived in London due to his fathers artistic career, they occasionally payed a visit to their relatives in Ireland which affected their child, William. Because of his frequent visits to Ireland, he grew sharply conscious of the conflict between England and Ireland, as well as the intense situation between Irish Catholics and Protestant descendants of British settlers in Ireland. In the late nineteenth century, as a member of the Irish Literary Society in London and National Literary Society in Dublin, William B. Yeats became one of the leading figures in the Irish cultural revival. According to Elizabeth Howes, Yeats's early poetry displayed a connection between nature, human and even mythic world, mainly focusing on local geographical imagination, but in the service of a nationalist (4). Yeats insisted on expressing his nationalism as well as his love towards country's folk-traditions and legends. The literature played a big role in creating new types of national identity in postcolonial Ireland. According to Declan Kiberd, central themes of writing at that time were gender and nationhood creating cultural representations of Ireland and Irishness (139).

Yeats's poetry often reflected current situation in the Irish society of his time. He often used poetry to describe certain important movements and used it to encourage other people to fight for their country. To quote Priyanka Maral, "Yeats's poetry is a reflection of the history of his time" (35). For better understanding of the main theme of this paper, it is important to have insight into Irish society at the end of the nineteenth century, especially the position of women and their role in that same society. It is not a secret that in the Irish society women were often marginalized. The Irish society, among other, was primarily patriarchal society, which was additionally encouraged by the Catholic Church. According to Maral, on January 11, 1881, for the first time in history, Irish women became the part of the national movement which a few years later resulted in establishment of an organization named Daughters of Ireland (36). The organization of radical Irish nationalist women was led by Maud Gonne, who had a

significant role both in Yeats's life and his poetry, as I will try to demonstrate in this paper. I will also try to demonstrate how she is represented in his poetry. Sometimes it is unclear whether he refers to her or Ireland. I will also analyse Yeats's perception of Ireland as a woman, as well as a representation of woman in his poetry in general. I also find interesting and inspiring the strength of his love towards Maud, his dedication to her and his persistency, as well as his level of patriotism and love for his beloved Ireland. In other words, this paper deals with different representations of women and Ireland in Yeats's poetry. The most important among these is definitely his love poetry dedicated to Maud Gonne, but also to other women in his life such as Iseult Gonne or his wife Georgie.

2. WOMEN AS YEATS'S EVERLASTING INSPIRATION

Yeats often used women from his close social surroundings as constant motifs and inspiration for his poems. With no doubt, the most important woman for Yeats was Maud Gonne to whom he dedicated a whole collection of poems. However, years later, another woman became the theme of Yeats's poetry and by accident or not, it was Maud's daughter Iseult. According to Amanda French, Yeats was like a father to Iseult while growing up affecting her future in education in Art, Literature and Poetry (4). With a little game from destiny, at the age of fourteen Iseult asked Yeats to marry her and he refused. The age difference between them was around thirty years, but Iseult obviously saw a father figure she never had in her life, thinking how it can be turned into love so the age gap never really bothered her. Therefore, it is not strange that in his poetry, Yeats referred to Iseult as a child. According to French, whenever writing to or about Iseult, Yeats always used an image of the shore because due to her name "which suggests the medieval lover of Tristan waiting on the grey coast of Normandy" (5). Just like he did for example in his poem "To a Child Dancing in the Wind":

Dance there upon the shore;

What need have you to care

For wind or water's roar?

Further on in the poem, while reading it, there is a feeling that Yeats also addressed his unreturned love with her mother Maud. He tells Iseult that because of her youth, she does not know how foolish someone who loves with all his heart is. He tells her how easy it is to lose love soon as you gain it. Here is also visible how after all those years, Yeats still suffered because of Maud, and no matter what happened, he would always find a way to address her indirectly.

Being young you have not known

The fool's triumph, nor yet

Love lost as soon as won. (p. 99)

In the next poem "Two Years Later" Yeats still continues to address Iseult as a child. An inexperienced child to whom no one explained how life is cruel and unpredictable. He feels a responsability to teach her, but she is too young. Maybe he refers to her marriage proposal trying to convince her that because of the big age difference they speak a very different language.

Has no one said those daring

Kind eyes should be learn'd?

Or warned you hoe despaiting

The moths are when they are burned?

I could have warned you; bu you are young

So we speak a different tongue. (p. 100)

It is interesting how a fate actually played with Yeats. After years and years of unsuccessful pursuit for Maud's affection, thirty years later her daughter shows affection towards him, but only this time he is the one who refuses. Nevertheless, he still finds a way to compare her with her mother, warning her of the danger of following in her mother's steps and of suffering in the end. He always does not hesitate to emphasize that she is young and he is old, and that their love cannot be achieved.

O you will take whatever's offered
And dream that all the world's a friend,
Suffer as you mother suffered,
Be as broken in the end.
But I am old an you are young,
And I speak a barbarous tongue. (p. 100)

It is interesting that Yeats rarely addressed his wife in his poems. In the poem titled "What Then" in which Yeats writes about his career as a famous poet. He addresses his life, specially his twenties as a period filled with pain. This can also be related to Maud as well.

He thought the same and lived by rule,
All his twenties crammed with toil.

Later on in the poem he writes about his dreams coming true. He accomplished a successful career which provided him with a comfortable life, but more importantly he started a family. This is where he mentions his wife and kids, but also a land of his beloved Ireland making his life nearly perfect.

All his happier dreams come true –
A small old house, wife, daughter, son
Grounds where plums and cabbage grew.

Poets and Wits about him drew.

He finally found peace, and was ready to grow old. He was satisfied with life and in the end everything turned out as he wanted. People loved his poems, he became popular, his beloved Ireland finally became peaceful as well, however, there is always one special person in his heart, mind and soul. A person he never accomplished to win completely, but still remained a great part of his life. It is of course his everlasting inspiration – Maud Gonne. She is the reason why his love poetry is so intriguing to many readers, and thanks to Yeats, Maud will always be someone's inspiration.

When it comes to poetry written in Irish, there is a distinct genre called *Aisling* poem (O'Brien, 46). What is specific about this kind of poetry is that Ireland is represented as a pretty young woman who often calls on the poet to help her defend her land. William Butler Yeats wrote his famous *Aisling* play – *Cathleen ni Houlihan* where he represented Ireland as an old, poor woman who can be transformed into a young woman only after a young man gives his life away for her sake. „Of course, the image of a country as a young or old woman is precisely that, an image, which is created through the use of quantifiable literary devices such as personification and *prosopopeia*." (O'Brien, 47). In this case, the identity of a vulnerable woman needy of man's protection becomes a general image of Ireland. When it comes to referring to Ireland as a woman, Yeats also had his share of it in his poetry, but due to ambiguities in his poetry, it often referred to Ireland and Maud at the same time.

3. IRELAND AS A WOMAN IN YEATS'S POETRY

Ireland was always visualized as a woman, a weak, dependent woman in need of attention and care of a dominant and strong man: England. In this case, the identity of a vulnerable woman needy of a man's protection becomes a general image of Ireland. In his

writing he was addressing Ireland in 'feminine' terms, often describing Ireland as a woman with long hair and dimmed eyes, sympathising with her and sharing her pain and sorrow. A poem that could serve as an example is definitely "He reproves the Curlew":

O curlew, cry no more in the air,
Or only to the water in the West;
Because your crying brings to my mind
Passion-dimmed eyes and long heavy hair
That was shaken out over my breast:
There is enough evil in the crying of the wind (p. 49)

His love poetry mainly referred to his unreturned love, but very often his poetry is ambiguous, referring to a woman and Ireland at the same time. According to Cullingford, young Yeats found his inspiration in his love for Maud, and in his love for his country making them almost impossible to distinguish in reading his poetry (171). Due to political situation in Ireland, Yeats despised England and everything she represented. He associated England with everything he hated about the modern world, with imperialism, urban ugliness and vulgar (Holdeman, 6). Ireland, on the other hand, was perceived as something completely opposite. Ireland represented a perfect place where people honoured their tradition and old beliefs making her worthy of being the main theme of his poetry: „I was compelled to live out of Ireland the greater part of every year, and was but keeping my mind upon what I knew must be the subject-matter of my poetry“(Yeats, 92). In 1895 Yeats wrote his first collection of poems named Crossways. After finishing the opening poem "The Wanderings of Oisin" Yeats decided to write poems only about Ireland; „...after finishing "The Wandering of Oisin", I had simplified my style by illing my imagination with country stories“. (Yeats, 223). Similar to the

poem "Down by the Salley Garden" where he writes about Ireland in "feminine" terms. He emphasizes her fragility and innocence together with transiency of life, possibly regretting for making wrong decisions in life.

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet,
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But, I being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

Reading this poem I could not help thinking how Yeats was able to use maternal instincts in this poem. It seems that he tried to present Ireland as a mother taking care of her child. He created an image of pain, but also an image of a caring, forgiving and protective mother. She is a wise mother who gives her child an advice, but also forgives him for not listening to her making sure no matter what happens, she will always be there for him.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;
But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears. (p. 16)

This is not surprising since Yeats wrote a poems addressing Ireland as a Mother or an Old Woman. Sometimes he used both of the terms in the same poem just like he did in "The Song of the Old Mother". The poem talks about an old working woman who is a servant in a rich household. The woman is old, tired, sad and unhappy. An old woman who is also a mother could serve as a metaphor for Ireland. Her violent and exhausting history and years of fighting for independence, always serving to wealthy rulers made her tired and more vulnerable as the years went by.

And their days goes over in idleness,

And they sigh if the wind but lift a tress:

While I must work because I am old,

And the seed of the fire gets feeble and cold. (p. 48)

He used an image of Ireland as a pale and fragile yet innocent woman in other poems as well. He wrote about her sufferings inflicted by enemies who dared to touch her perfection. Furthermore, he constantly shows his compassion to her pain. Every time someone hurts her, it hurts him as well. Another poem can also be read in this light "He Remembers Forgotten Beauty".

Where such grey cloud of incense rose

That only God's eyes did not close:

For that pale breast and lingering hand,

Come from a more dream-heavy land,

A more dream-heavy hour than this;

And when you sigh form kiss to kiss

I hear white Beauty sighing, too. (p.50)

Another way of addressing Ireland in Yeats's poetry is addressing his Beloved. Although he sometimes used this term to address to Maud, he much more often used it as a term for Ireland. In examples like this, previously mentioned ambiguity can finally be seen. Nevertheless, in the case of "He bids his Beloved be at Peace". The speaker refers completely to Ireland. Maybe the title gives it away right away, because all Yeats ever wanted was for Ireland to become a free peaceful state.

O vanity of Sleep, Hope, Dream, endless Desire,

The horses of Disaster plunge in the heavy clay:

Beloved, let your eyes half close, and your heart beat

Over my heart, and your hair fall over my breast,

Drowning love's lonely hour in deep twilight of rest.

And hiding their tossing manes and their tumultuous feet. (p.49)

After writing the collection *In the Seven Woods* in 1903, Yeats himself confessed: "My work has got far more masculine. It has more salt in it!" (qtd. in Foster, 297). It seems like Yeats decided to abandon previously used "feminine" terms and replace them with the new ones, more masculine or better yet, more heroic. Contrary to the previously idealized "feminine" world, a new form of writing suggested that Yeats gave up on poetry, beauty and love. In the poem "Never Give all the Heart" he shows his disappointment and broken heart telling the reader to think twice before giving his whole heart to a woman who will take it, play with it and eventually break it.

Never give all the heart, for love

Will hardly seem worth thinking of

To passionate woman if it seem

O never give the heart outright,

For they, for all smooth lips can say,

Have given their hearts up to the play

And who could play it well enough

If deaf and dumb and blind with love?

He that made this knows all the cost,

For he gave all his heart and lost. (p.63)

As it is obvious from these analyses, to Yeats poetry served as a kind of diary in which he conveyed his feelings, thoughts and desires to the reader. It showed how great love towards

his country really was, how he imagined her as a woman, but a woman often related to the woman he never had – Maud Gonne.

4. LOVE POETRY DEDICATED TO MAUD GONNE

One of the most important collections of love poetry in which Maud served as a muse was certainly *The Rose*. Before the analysis it is necessary to explain the origin of the rose symbol used in ancient Egypt, in order to understand why Yeats decided to use exactly this flower in his poetry. As Barbara Seward points out, the symbolism of rose goes far back into history during the early development of Christianity (6). Rose used to associate with Greek goddess Aphrodite representing immortality and love. Soon after that, the rose began to symbolize beauty and love in general (7). Since Yeats referred to Maud as a goddess, maybe he was inspired by Aphrodite and decided to use exactly that flower to plead her love and affections. Yeats once said that he used Rose as other name for love because of its double meaning; of a fisherman who had „never a crack“ in his heart; of an old woman complaining of the idleness of the young...“ (153). Furthermore, according to Alana White, Rose represents love and woman, but at the same time pain and death. In Yeats's case, it can be associated with love, but also pain and sorrow he felt every time when Maud refused his love. She states how it can also be connected with Mother Nature and motherhood concluding that it served as a representation of mother country, in this case Ireland (20). These claims can all be true. Almost every poem in this collection was dedicated to his unreturned love – Maud Gonne, but also to his second love, his beloved mother country Ireland.

Yeats first laid eyes on Maud in January 1889, in Abbey Theatre. Maud was a 22-year-old actress, a daughter of rich British colonel in Ireland. From the moment Yeats saw Maud, he was dazzled by her beauty; „I had never thought to see a living women of such great beauty.

It belonged to famous pictures, to poetry, to some legendary past...Her movements were earthy of her form, and I understood at last why the poet of antiquity where we would speak of face and form, sings, loving some lady, that spaces like a goddess" (qtd. Ahmed 16-17). Very soon her beauty and perfection served him as an inspiration for the poem "The Song of Wandering Aengus" in which he evokes their first meeting.

It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air (p.47)

Elizabeth Cullingford states that Yeats's representation of a woman as an Ideal Beauty, Muse and Ireland often seemed conventional, but Yeats lived at the time when a constant battle between convention and innovation in the construction of gender was at its height (169). At this point Yeats merged Maud as his Beloved at the same time using her as an image for Ireland. Just like when writing about Ireland, he often put Maud on the pedestal, representing her as a proud and eternal being whose beauty does not belong to this world. She is also present in "A Rose of Peace" from *The Rose* collection.

If Michael, leader of God's host
When Heaven and Hell met,
Looked down on you from Heaven's door-post
He would his deeds forget (p.28)

Even though Maud was born and raised in British upper class family, she showed real compassion for Irish people due to their political and social situation in their country. At that time. Besides that, "she also decided with no hesitation to join them into their fight for independence" (Zhang and Wang 2589). Along with her dazzling and outstanding beauty Yeats

was probably attracted to her even more because she shared his dream of free Ireland. She showed bravery not only because of the fact she was British, but because she decided to pick "enemies" side after what she was judged and attacked by many British. Yeats was aware how brave her actions actually are. He also associated her beauty with his beloved Ireland. For him, it represented joy and freedom probably because when he would see Maud, he would feel joy, but at the same time she fought against invaders which for him served as a synonym for freedom. "Her power over crowds was at its height, and some portion of the power came because she could still, even when pushing an abstract principle to what seemed to me as an absurdity, keep her own mind free…" (Yeats, 218). Her courage and love for Ireland attracted Yeats for the most part, but Maud was not indifferent towards Yeats either. They shared a lot of things in common and found themselves in a type of „symbiosis“. It could be said that they balanced one another since Maud was active, passionate and direct while Yeats was coy, shy ideologist. Furthermore, Yeats was so impressed by her beauty that a lot of times he compared her with old Greek statues. For him, she was a perfect masterpiece "with the face of some Greek statue. Her whole body seemed a master work of long labouring thought, as though a Scopas had measured and calculated, consorted with Egyptian sages, and mathematicians out of Babylon that he might outface even Artemisia's sepulchral image with a living norm" (Yeats, 218).

He addressed to her in almost every poem. He loved to compare her beauty with goddesses and other historical characters similar to Helena of Troy. In "The Rose of the World" he wrote about everlasting beauty which lives forever thanks to the author's pen which made her immortal:

Who dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?

For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,

Mournful that no new wonder may betide,

Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam (p. 28)

During this period, Yeats wrote about Maud only in a positive light. For him, she was flawless and could stand only by the greatest from literal history. Using elements from Troy, Yeats suggests how Maud's beauty just like Helena's could be a reason for war. Her beauty was so striking that he even asked archangels to bow putting Maud right next to God.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode:
Before you were, or any hearts to beat
Weary and kind one lingered by His seat:
He made the world to be a grassy road
Before her wandering feet (p. 28)

Being so much in love with Maud, Yeats often dreamed of having her for himself. He wanted her to be with his beloved one free as a bird. He imagined them as two birds who could fly away from troubles any time they wished. Maybe this could also refer to Ireland as well, since both Maud and Yeats fought for its freedom dreaming of Free State. However, the motif for writing this poem did not come from Yeats himself. As it is stated in the book written by Maud's grandaughter Anna MacBride White, one day while they were walking along the sea and two seagulls flew over their heads, Maud told Yeats she would love him to write her a poem about seagulls. She also added she would like to be one of those two birds (20). Three days later, he sent her the poem he named "The White Birds".

A weariness comes from those dreamers, dew-dabbled, the lily and rose;
Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the flame of the meteor that goes,
Or the flame of the blue star that lingers hung low in the fall of the dew:
For I would we were changed to white birds on the wandering foam:
I and You! (p. 33)

Since Maud was a very active member in Irish society and one of the leading rebellion figures against the English, she could have easily become a target of her enemies. Her life was constantly in danger but she showed no fear. Nevertheless, Yeats felt that fear, fear of losing her forever by the hand of the enemy. It becomes obvious how big his love towards her actually is and how he is scared more for her life than for his own. This poem could relate to Ireland as well and the cold wind blowing over her could represent English conquers. Under the influence of the fear he felt, he wrote a poem in which he expresses his weakness and that weakness is of course Maud. He is also scared of losing her showing his "Achilles heel".

A pity beyond all telling
Is hid in the heart of love:
The folk who are buying and selling,
The clouds on their journey above,
The cold wet winds over blowing,
And the shadowy hazel grove
Where mouse –grey waters are flowing,
Threaten the head that I love (The Pity of Love, p. 32)

Throughout his early poetry Maud was the main object of his poems. That is why he put in a lot of romance into his poems. He probably used it so that Maud could see how he really felt for her and eventually realize that he would give up everything for her sake. It is obvious that Yeats was thirsty for love, attention, intimacy and closeness to a woman, especially Maud: “I would spread the cloths under your feet” ("He wishes for the Cloths of Heaven", p. 59). In this poem Yeats also emphasize that he is a poor dreamer who has nothing to offer to Maud but his dreams and feelings, creating a feeling for the reader that Maud rejected

him for being poor. It can be also understood as Yeats's regrets: how he can never give her as much as she actually deserves. He states that he already gave her his dreams, dreams which are dedicated to nobody else but Maud herself. I guess the following lines from this poem could be probably interpreted in various ways:

> But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
>
> I have spread my dreams under your feet;
>
> Tread softly because you tread on my dreams (p. 59)

In 1899, Yeats wrote his next poetry collection he named *The Wind Among the Reeds.* Like in his previous collections, Maud was a central motif of his poems. One poem, however, stands out. It might represent a true power of love he felt for her, but, unlike other poems from previous collection, this one sounded more serious. It seemed that Yeats still wrote poetry to Maud, but in a much more mature way. The title of the poem is „The Lover Mourns for the Loss of Love"

> Pale brows, still hands and dim hair,
>
> I had a beautiful friend
>
> And dreamed that the old despair
>
> Would end in love in the end:
>
> She looked in my heart one day
>
> And saw your image was there;
>
> She has gone weeping away (p. 48)

At the same time when this poem was written, around 1899, Yeats was in a relationship with Olivia Shakespeare. Their relationship was secret because Oliva was married, but they still maintained their relationship and over the time, deeper feelings started to develop. While reading this poem, there is a feeling that you can actually sense the pain of the woman „weeping

away“. This poem seems to be filled with emotions. On the one hand, it shows how great and strong Yeats's feelings for Maud actually are, how one woman completely took over his heart, soul and body, but on the other, it shows how he finally had someone who loved him, someone who truly cared about him and decided to throw it all away. While trying to gain Yeats's heart to surrender to her, Olivia realized how reserved and cold his feelings towards her actually were. She realized that the reason for this behaviour was another woman. A woman who constantly turned him down. However, he could not let go of her. He was still madly in love with Maud and remained to be the dreamer whose dream „would end in love in the end“.

Still focusing on his painful and addictive love towards Maud, it is worth analysing another romantic poem which evokes certain emotions from my part while reading it. The poem is direct, honest, and written in the time when Yeats already experienced rejections and sorrow.

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep; (p. 32)

Directly talking to Maud, he „warns“ her that one day, when she is old, grey and alone, she will regret not having given him a chance. The speaker of the poem is a great lover who adored her good sides, as well as bad, and a lover who truly loved the core of her existence. He is a lover who after being rejected numerous time still finds strength and insists on loving her after all.

How many loved moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face; (p. 32)

Soon after, around 1899, Yeats's love for Maud was still strong, but after being disappointed so many times, he slowly stopped putting her on a pedestal, and became a little bit rude and bitter when writing about her. Never giving up on her, he firmly believed that one day she would be his beloved. He became aware that their love would never happen, but subconsciously he still believed and hoped that Maud would change her mind and that they would eventually become an item. This can be seen throughout his poems in *The Wind Among the Reeds*. In "The Fish", the author created a feeling of resentment towards Maud, and maybe regret for the years he spent declaring his love and none of it was worth his pain.

> Although you hide in the ebb and flow
> Of the pale tide when the moon has set,
> The people of coming days will know
> About the casting out of my net,
>
> And how you have leaped times out of mind
> Over the little silver cords,
> And think that you were hard and unkind,
> And blame you with many bitter words (p.46)

Later in his poetry, like in "O Do Not Love Too Long" Yeats continued writing poetry filled with anger and despair towards Maud. These were the years when he probably became aware that Maud would never accept his proposals and that he should just give up on her. He often recalled years he spent loving her, and again addressed to Maud through his poem and stated how loving someone for a long time was just not worth it. He states that nobody deserves so much love and time because in the end, someone always gets hurt. This was not only a message for Maud, but a lesson for the reader not to make the same mistake as he did.

Sweetheart, do not love too long:

I loved long and long,

And grew to be out of fashion

Like an old song

All though the years of our youth

Neither could have known

Their own thought from the other's,

We were so much at one (p. 67)

Even though in his later works he never looked at Maud as he did in the period of greatest affection, he still often recalled her beauty and love he felt for her. She was still his muse, but without so much idealizing on the one hand, and resentment on the other. At this point, around 1910, he wrote in sort of a moderate way, creating an image of Maud as a beautiful woman. She was not a goddess, but as a human being he longed for:

Wine comes in at the mouth

And love comes in at the eye:

That's all we shall know for truth

Before we grow old and die.

I lift the glass to my mouth,

I look at you, and I sigh. (p. 75)

As a years went by, both Maud and Yeats grew old. Even in his late years, Yeats still wrote about her. Even though she was old and grey, to him she was still the most beautiful of all. As opposed to the time when he was madly in love and saw no flaws, when he got old he admitted that she had flaws, but he still adored her. Here we can also see how he stopped

representing her as something perfect, and how he realized that she was actually only human. The poem "Broken Dreams" shows his memories of her when she was young, but also his hope that in the next life, they will finally be together.

Vague memories, nothing but memories,
But in the grave all, all, shall be renewed.
You are more beautiful than any one,
And yet your body had a flaw
The hands that I have kissed,
For old sakes' sake. (p. 129)

Here he showed his belief in reincarnation, and a hope that another life would bring him the woman he so much adored. It is very interesting how after all those years, and after numerous rejections, Yeats never gave up on his love with Maud.

5. CONCLUSION

William Butler Yeats was one of the greatest Irish writers, he was also a nationalist, revolutionist and patriot. He was a very important person in establishing Ireland as a Free state, always fighting for its freedom against English conquers. Yeats's childhood was very important to him as well, because due to his father work, he had to live in England instead in his beloved Ireland. His love towards his country was huge, and he kept on representing her in his poems as perfect, glorious and proud. Ireland often served as the main theme for his poetry, addressing her only in "feminine" terms, mostly as a woman with long hair and dimmed eyes. Before he met a fatal Maud Gonne, Ireland was his main theme, but after he fell in love, his love poetry became ambiguous referring to Maud and Ireland at the same time. Throughout his work, it became visible how his mood in writing changed over time. At first, he was fascinated with

Maud's beauty, comparing her with goddesses and other mythical creatures, flawless and perfect. Later on, he proposed to Maud four times and she kept turning him down. He then started to write poetry filled with bitterness and disappointment. When he grew old, he still continued to write about Maud. For him, she was still the most beautiful one, but at this point she was presented more as a human being with flaws and faults. Throughout his life, Yeats never gave up on Maud despite her constant refusal. Even though he eventually got married to his wife Georgie, he never stopped loving Maud. Thanks to him, even in today's modern literacy Maud remained as one of the most interesting characters. She is remembered not only as Yeats's pure desire, but also as a heroine fighting for women's rights, as well as Irish Free State. It is not only Maud that served as an inspiration for Yeats's poetry. There was also her daughter Iseult, but due to their age difference their love was never accomplished. His mother country Ireland embodied in a shape of a woman, his everlasting inspiration Maud Gonne, her daughter Iseult and eventually his wife Georgie all served to Yeats as his inspiration for writing some of the best and most beautiful love poems from the late nineteenth century. But, all of them shared one thing in common. They were all represented as beautiful, flawless, innocent, brave and nearly perfect women.

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