

## A Prayer for My Daughter: A Reflection of Yeats' Personal Life

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The poem opens with the poet's new born child sleeping in a cradle. A storm is raging with a great fury outside his residence. The poet is in a gloomy mood, the impending ruin of the current civilization distracts his mind. The poet prays that his daughter maybe gifted with beauty but beauty which does not make strangers distraught.

He realizes that his intellectual hatred is of a nasty kind. It is because of the unwholesome bent of the mind that Maud Gonne married a fool. The poet wished that her daughter should not cultivate such intellect. As we can clearly see in the poem from the beginning Yeat's personal feelings, failures, and emotions are shown though indirectly.

A.N. Jeffares points out that the poet was achieving flexibility as revealed in the poem. It freely describes the poet's mood of gloom and then to the idea of beauty in women; from there to symbols of great love disappointing, to 'Helen', Aphrodite and by implication of Maud Gonne.

Yeats came in contact with Maud Gonne in 1888. Yeats aged only twenty- three at the time fell head over ears in love with her. she was a country girl of an aristocratic family. She was extremely beautiful and also extremely nationalist. Yeats realized that his literary aim and activities were not likely to impress Maud Gonne who was "Fire-Eating" revolutionary. He, therefore, became deeply engaged during 1897 and 1898 in political movement but that was so unlike

him. She parted company with him and went to France in a fit of frenzy.

Maud Gonne found that Yeats was the right person who could make her life happy. In February, 1903, Yeats got a letter from her from Paris intimating that she had married Major John MacBride. To the cultured and idealistic poet that Yeats was a news came as a severe shock. The one woman who was his all in all in life had ended by marrying a 'Lout'. His heart was broken.

The 'Murderous innocence of the sea' recalls the images of the violence of the 1919. The 'Bandy-Legged Smith' is MacBride and 'Helen' in Maud Gonne by implication. Yeats has Maud Gonne in his mind when he says "it's certain that fine women eat a crazy salad". The 'rich horn of plenty' is suggestive of aristocracy, and ceremony. The 'hidden laurel tree' can provide through the custom the innocence of soul. The union of Aphrodite with Hephaestus, a bandy legged smith, brings to mind the Maud Gonne – MacBride episode.

Though he was keeping himself busy to forget Maud and came in contact with many other women like Diana Vernon yet he could not. He had loved too deeply and intensely to get her out of his mind. The obsession with Maud Gonne was lasting. His sense of defeat of old values and his sense of sexual inadequacy set up a new ferment in him. Out of his quarrel with himself, he produced the best poetry and "A Prayer For My Daughter" is one of them.

There is a praise of the charm, wisdom, and the glad kindness that Yeats had found in marriage. His main tirade is against hatred, and especially “Intellectual Hatred”. In these lines.

“Have I not seen the loveliest woman born  
Out of the mouth of the plenty’s horn,  
Because of her opinionated mind  
Barter that horn and every good  
By quite natures understood  
For an old bellows full of angry wind”

The idea is that a beautiful woman should not spoil her beauty or her nature in politics which is full of dirt and hatred. We find another contemptuous reference to MacBride whom Maud Gonne, so richly endowed with beauty, married spurning the repeated proposals of the poet. Maud

Gonne bartered the horn for a pair of ‘old bellows full of angry wind’ which is an ambiguous reference both to the futility of her angry politics and to a worthless husband with whom she saddled herself.

The poem is criticized as based on triviality, for the poet has not desired for his daughter a way of life consistent with the highest religious or moral ideas. He has not prayed for any Christian virtues for her. Reverent as he is, he does not convey any religion. Instead, we are offered in the poem an aristocratic faith. However, all such criticism is irrelevant. The poet desires for her ‘organic’ innocence and freedom from hatred. The poet has been true to his convictions and so the poem is another expression of his personal experience and honesty.