

No Second Troy Summary

Writer: William Butler Yeats | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

Summary

Poet's Sorrow and Question: In this poem, W. B. Yeats expresses his mixed feelings toward his beloved Maud Gonne. He asks, "Why should I blame her?" She brought sorrow into his life, but not intentionally. Maud Gonne was a passionate, brave, and nationalist woman who inspired uneducated people to rebel in the name of freedom. Yeats realizes that she acted this way because her spirit was fiery; she could never remain calm. So, though she caused his pain, he cannot truly blame her.

Character and Beauty of Maud Gonne: Yeats sees Maud Gonne as a great yet restless soul. Her mind was noble, but that very nobility gave her no peace. The poet says, "That nobleness made simple as a fire". It means her character was simple yet burning like fire. Her beauty was not ordinary; "With beauty like a tightened bow" shows that her beauty was tense, strong, and dangerous like a drawn bow. She was a woman unnatural for this age, "That is not natural in an age like this." She was high-minded, solitary, and stern, "Being high and solitary and most stern."

Final Symbol and Meaning: At the end, Yeats says, "What could she have done, being what she is? / Was there another Troy for her to burn?". It meant she was what she was; she could not be changed. The fire and power within her could not be controlled. Yeats compares her to Helen of Troy, whose beauty caused the destruction of Troy. Maud Gonne's beauty, too, is both inspiring and destructive. But in the modern world, there is no "Second Troy" left for her to burn. Through this final line, Yeats expresses the deep conflict of love, history, and human life. Beauty can inspire creation, but it can also bring destruction.