

Leda and the Swan

classmate

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— William Butler Yeats

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Summary.

"Leda and the Swan", a romantic sonnet, has been written by William Butler Yeats. Yeats is one of the greatest poets of the 20th century. Even as he was an Irish man, he ranked with the greatest British poets of the Modern age. "Leda and the Swan", is a sonnet, a traditional fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter. The structure of this sonnet is Petrarchan with a clear separation between the first eight lines and the final six, the dividing line being the moment of ejaculation - "the shudder in the loins". The rhyme scheme of the sonnet is ABAB CDCD EFG EFG. This poem is in a very sensual and beautiful way.

The first quatrain of this sonnet narrates, the story of mating a common girl and a god, while the former was bathing naked in a stream. Zeus, in the form of a (god) a big bird, Swan is represented as giving a sudden and staggering blow to the girl Leda as she bathed naked in a pool.

The second quatrain (stanza) shows the

helplessness of the beautiful and delicate maiden. Leda being subjected the sexual exploitation by the god Jupiter. The poet says that the naked bathing girl and unable to save herself from the mating by Jupiter in the form of Swan. Her fingers of the hands were weak and delicate and she was terrified enough, so she found herself unable to push off the big white bird with lots of feathers.

The third quatrain brings the act between Leda and Swan its to its ultimate satisfying conclusion. They both felt a shudder in their loins. Thus a god mated with a mortal and the event proved a fateful one as it set in motion a whole chain of events. In due course, the girl gave birth to Helen, who, in turn, became the cause of Trojan war, and the burning of the roof and tower of Troy and also of the destruction of big wall around Troy. Leda later gave birth to another girl named Clytemnestra who caused the tragedy of Agamemnon by killing him.

The couplet, the last two lines of the sonnet conclude the poem with rhetoric question. The poet wants to know if Leda imbibed the knowledge with physical power of the god Zeus after the sex act when he no longer interested beak of the Swan released the rape of the

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Thus, the poem has a strong tone of Romanticism, clearly refuting the idea of the story in which Leda was raped. The swan is a symbol of purity, beauty, grace, love and elegance, but it can also symbolize divination and balance. Its subject matter is extremely non-traditional.