

# ARTS AND COMMERCE COLLEGE, ASHTA

- Class : B.A.II
- Subject : Modern English Literature (Poetry)

A Presentation on

‘Leda and the Swan’

A Presentation by

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# Leda and the Swan (1923)

Published in 'The Tower' (1928)

# Homework questions

- 1. Research the myth of Leda and the swan**
- 2. In Yeats' theories of gyres, this incident was the initiation of a new age, linked to the Virgin Mary. What parallels can you draw? What else might Leda and the swan symbolise? Why might Yeats have chosen this myth?**
- 3. What is the form of the poem and why might Yeats have used it?**
- 4. Feminist readings of the poem might suggest that this poem implies rape can be pleasurable for a woman. What do you think?**

# The Annunciation – the initial title

- The **Annunciation** (anglicised from the Latin Vulgate Luke 1:26-39 *Annuntiatio nativitatis Christi*), also referred to as the **Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary** or **Annunciation of the Lord**, is the Christian celebration of the announcement by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive and become the mother of Jesus, the Son of God, marking his Incarnation.

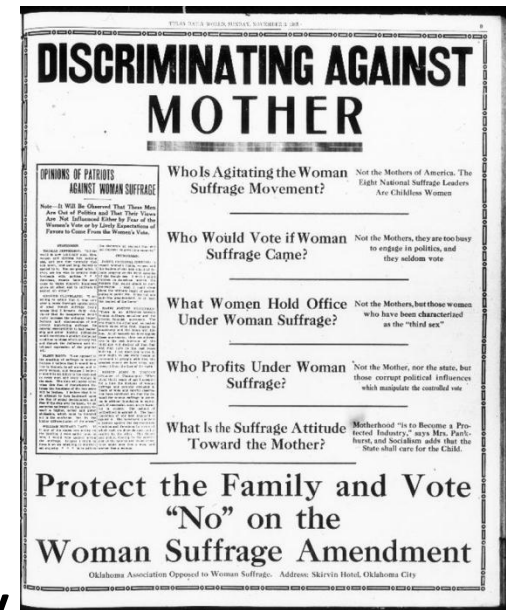


# Overview – AO4

- Alludes to the myth of rape by Leda, wife of Tyndareus, King of Sparta, by Zeus in the form of a swan.
- She gave birth to three eggs – one contained Clytemnestra and Castor, the other Helen and Pollux, and the final one remained unhatched.
- Yeats interprets the rape as the ‘annunciation that founded Greece’; beginning of another historical cycle, 2000BC to AD 1.

# AO4 – Ireland and sexuality

- The Irish free state had been established in 1922
- Sexual purity was a key feature; particularly for women
- Contraception and divorce outlawed
- Yeats didn't agree with its repressive nature and was pro-divorce (selfishly perhaps?)
- Many were vehemently anti-suffrage for women too



# Language, structure and form –A02

- Petrarchan sonnet
- Imagery of sexuality and war
- Plosive sounds/aural imagery
- Synecdoche
- Enjambment
- Octave and sestet
- Verb choices
- Anapaest
- Rhetorical questions
- Metaphor



# Critical interpretations

- The poem uses the typical Petrarchan sonnet 'pattern of sexual pressure and release' (Paul Fussell)
- A 'revisionist love sonnet' (Elizabeth Butler Cullingford)
- 'Post-coital indifference merges with the indifference of that destructively creative power towards the vessel of its impulse' (Thomas R Whitaker)