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Gaelic Tradition and the Celtic Revival in children's literature in Scottish Gaelic and English

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The following chapter will discuss and contextualize a selection of literature composed for Scottish children during the latter part of the Long Nineteenth Century, specifically the period of the Celtic Revival (c. 1880-c.1920), which was composed in Gaelic, or else composed in English but based upon Gaelic heroic characters of the Finn (Fionn) and Ulster Cycles. The cycles, centred, respectively, upon the notable deeds of Fionn mac Cumhaill and Cù Chulainn, were known and circulated throughout the Gaelic-speaking regions of both Scotland and Ireland from at least the medieval period, and are represented by a significant collection of manuscripts composed and preserved upon either side of the Irish Sea (their heroes, within the tales themselves, travel just as freely back and forth). Both Fionn and Cù Chulainn, moreover, are said to have begun their remarkable careers in early childhood, and other children play similarly important roles within both Cycles, yet it is not until the Nineteenth Century when examples of literature describing the feats of these children are repackaged overtly as literature for children. Lingering awareness of the so-called Ossianic Controversy, arising from the claims of James Macpherson (1736-1796) to have rediscovered three-thousand-year-old poetry composed by Fionn mac Cumhaill's son, Oisean ('Ossian'), may have been partly responsible for fostering this development, but factors underlying the galvanization of the Celtic Revival itself, and central to the ideals of its devotees, were also significant. Examples of these factors particular to Scottish writers, expressed by their works for children, will be considered, as will the impact of increasing suppression of the Gaelic language within the Scottish education system after 1872, and its consequent decline amongst younger speakers. At the same time, writers whose own Gaelic was limited, but whose sympathy for Revivalist ideals of a reimagined Celtic past stimulated their interest in the deeds of its traditional heroes, focused their attention upon presenting these deeds to a wider, English-speaking audience, via the medium (and resulting influence) of a limited collection of existing translations. Common to literature in both Gaelic and English, though more pronounced in the former, is the adoption of a gently (sometimes stridently) didactic tone, hectoring its readers to pay heed to the apathy which has nurtured a climate of political injustice, and fostered the deterioration of their own language amongst younger generations of Gaels.

The first section of the chapter, by Innes, will focus upon literature for children composed in Gaelic, exploring two plays, *Dùsgadh na Féinne* ('The Awakening of the *Fèinn*'), published in 1908 by Catriona NicGhille-Bhàin Ghrannnd (Katherine Whyte Grant), and *Am Mosgladh Mòr* ('The Great Awakening'), by Calum MacPhàrlain (Malcolm MacFarlane), published seven years later.¹ Its second half, by Mathis, will discuss a number of late-nineteenth-century items based upon Gaelic sources for traditional characters' deeds, but composed in English, chiefly those by Eleanor Hull, William Sharp ('Fiona Macleod'), and Louise Charlotte Jack, each of which acknowledge the influence of Alexander Carmichael's *Deirdire*, collected in the 1860s from the oral tradition of the island of Barra.

I: Literature in Gaelic: *Dùsgadh agus Mosgladh* ('Awakening and Rousing')

During the Celtic Revival in Scotland it was common for Scottish Gaels, and Scots more generally, to be portrayed as awakening, or on the verge of awakening; sometimes they were told it was high time for them to awaken. Lachlan Macbean (1853-1931) delivered a lecture to The Gaelic Society of Inverness in 1896 entitled 'The Mission of the Celt'. Macbean, raised in Kiltarlity, was the editor of *The Fifeshire Advertiser*. He was also a Gaelic writer and translator.² His lecture started with an historical overview of the Revival:

The Gael suddenly awoke to the alarming fact that his native tongue, which more than anything else was the distinguishing mark of his tribe, was dying out before the tongue of the Southron. The thought touched his sensitive and melancholy nature as nothing else could. [...] Having now glanced over this heaving tide of new Celtic life which has overflowed the fields of literature, music, customs, and social progress, it remains for us to ask, What of the future? The Gael are awakening to consciousness, and as a man when he becomes conscious, first asks, What am I? Whence am I? What am I here for? So the Gael must ask, What are we? What are our capabilities? What is our destiny? [...] Well, now, we have looked at these three currents of our times – the rising tide of Celtic revival among ourselves, the flow of Celtic sentiment and ideas in English life and literature, and the stream of Celtic blood into city life – and we should now be in a position

to guess what is the mission and destiny of the Celt. It is surely by infusion of ideas and transfusion of blood to leaven modern civilization with its own awakening spirit.³

It was not just that the Gaels were asleep; they were in fact in a spellbound slumber:

Until quite lately, we seem to have been a race under some evil enchantment. We were ashamed of our Gaelic, ashamed of being Highlanders [...] but all this is changed; the spell is broken.⁴

The notion of a 'sleeping hero' who would awaken from an enchantment to lead the way was a powerful commonplace among Celtic Revival writers and artists. It arises from a motif and folklore tale-type that was, and is, ubiquitous in many countries (AT766).⁵ In Scotland it was sometimes represented visually, as in 'The Awakening of Cuchullin' (1895), a mural painted by John Duncan (1866-1945) at Ramsay Lodge in Edinburgh.⁶ It can also be detected in the words of Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), who spoke of characters such as Merlin awaiting their awakening, such that 'in some young soul here and there the spirit of the hero and the poet may awaken... such is our Scottish and Celtic Renaissance.'⁷ In Wales it was Arthur who was to rise again to improve the lot of Wales and the Welsh language.⁸ In Ireland the 'sleeping hero' tale was told about numerous historical and fictional characters, and we can easily source its use at the time of the Revival.⁹ For instance, in the first issue of the periodical *Ulaid* in 1904, Joseph Campbell (1879-1944) published a short story described by the *Irish News* at the time as a 'propagandist parable':

I dreamed a dream. Methought a voice spoke to me as from the clouds. It said, 'The time is upon us! I looked around, fearfully, and beheld a haggard old woman before me.' [...] 'The time for the heroes to ride forth,' she said. 'I wandered just now into that cave that pierces this hill at its foot. I saw there the heroes of the sons of Niall. Many think they are dead. They are not dead, I tell you. They are lying trance-bound, as in sleep. [...] 'They are not ridden forth yet. I have not broken the ancient spell that binds them. They are biding the setting of the sun and the passing of the night. They will ride forth at the dawn. [...] When I awoke again it was dawn. My face was to the rising sun. I arose joyfully, and gave the day-god salutation. [...] Too long have they lain trance-bound and sleeping, but now they are stirred. The spell of enchantment is broken. They are gone forth, and till the Day of the Great Judgment they may not be recalled. They shout their ancient war-cry – 'Lámh Dearg ar uachtar! – and ride out into the morning. May the road rise to them, and to all that follow! May victory sit on the banners of the Red Hand!¹⁰

Among Scottish Gaels the motif of the sleeping hero was most often associated with Fionn mac Cumhaill and his band of heroic warriors, known as *An Fhèinn* (appearing in English most commonly as the Fianna or the Fingalians). They were portrayed as sleeping in a cave, awaiting the call to rise up once more. The warriors of the *Fèinn*, extremely popular in written and oral Gaelic storytelling culture since the medieval period, were often understood to represent Highland Scots. As William T. Kilgour noted in 1908 of the sleeping *Fèinn* tale:

Some treat [it] symbolically, and say that *an Fheinn air a b-uilinn* (the Feinne on their elbows) is representative of the Gael these many years past, and that some day, whether it be on the third blast of the trump or not is indicated, but certainly some day, they will shew the world their full strength.¹¹

The tale of the *Fèinn* asleep in a cave appears in print in Scotland at least as early as 1848.¹² It was collected from Gaelic tradition-bearers at the end of the nineteenth century, and appears in a number of folklore collections.¹³ To those with a knowledge of the huge Irish and Scottish Gaelic tradition of the *Fèinn*, as we have it from the middle ages onwards, this tale is somewhat odd, since the deaths of the heroes, and the survival of Oisean as their last-surviving witness, are integral to the genre.¹⁴ Notwithstanding the tale's slightly ambiguous relationship to the rest of the Finn-cycle, by the nineteenth century it appears to have become a part of that tradition in Highland Scotland. The sleeping *Fèinn* appear in Scottish and Irish children's literature in English during this period, for instance: Lady Augusta Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men* (1904); Donald Alexander Mackenzie, *Finn and His Warrior Band* (1911); Violet Russell, *Heroes of the Dawn* (1914).¹⁵ Therefore, it is perhaps unsurprising that two Gaelic plays for children, written by Gaelic activists at the beginning of the twentieth century, both employ the 'sleeping hero' motif: *Dùsgadh*

na Féinne by Katherine Whyte Grant (1908), and Malcolm MacFarlane's *Am Mosgladh Mòr* (1914-15). Before we turn our attention to these two works, it may be useful to highlight why plays, and not prose tales, were favoured for Gaelic-speaking children at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Gaelic literacy had increased somewhat in Scotland from the first half of the nineteenth century as a result of schooling run by organisations such as the Edinburgh Society for the Support of Gaelic Schools, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge.¹⁶ These schools taught Gaelic reading skills to enable access to scripture in that language, but also saw it as a necessary evil on the road towards the teaching and acquisition of English.¹⁷ A number of Gaelic primers, and more advanced readers, were published to meet the needs of these schools. For instance, in 1816 Gaelic primers for use in the Edinburgh Society circulating schools began to appear.¹⁸ The readers and primers published in the first half of the nineteenth century contained overwhelmingly religious content. The most ambitious school Gaelic readers from this period are those by the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod (1783-1862), known as *Caraid nan Gàidheal* ('Friend of the Gaels').¹⁹ The content of MacLeod's readers is also primarily religious, although there is a little secular material, including, somewhat remarkably given its audience, an essay, 'Long Mhòr nan Eilthreach' ('The Great Ship of the Exiles') which promotes Highland emigration.²⁰ The creation of a Gaelic readership led to a concurrent increase in Gaelic-language publishing, which again mirrored the religious nature of many of the schools: 75% of books published in Gaelic between 1800 and 1880 were religious.²¹ Gaelic religious literature from the earlier part of this period, aimed at children, would include the Rev. Duncan Grant's *Dleasdanas na Cloinne bhi 'g iarruidh agus a' gràdhachadh Chrìosd* (1829), a translation of his English-language publication, *The Duty of Children to Love and Seek Christ* (1822).²²

The establishment, however, of universal mandatory primary education, and creation of school boards, under the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872, effectively brought an end to the use of Gaelic in schooling in Scotland for a number of generations.²³ Michael Newton observes that after 1872 schools normalised "Anglophone literature before the Gaelic equivalents had the chance to mature. The shortage of an audience literate in Gaelic dampened demand and hence the economy of scale in Gaelic publishing."²⁴ After 1872 organisations such as the Gaelic Society of Inverness and then An Comunn Gàidhealach ('The Highland Association') were campaigning, with limited success, to have Gaelic-speaking children be taught to read in Gaelic.²⁵ A series of short biographies written in the 1920s on teachers who had been sympathetic to the Gaelic cause noted that at the turn of the century, "Gaelic teaching was carried on under considerable difficulty: suitable text-books were not available, and 'Caraid nan Gàidheal' provided most of the reading matter".²⁶ During this late nineteenth- / early twentieth-century campaign phase, concurrent with the Celtic Revival more generally, non-religious Gaelic literature for children very slowly began to appear. For instance, Malcolm MacFarlane, (1853-1931) who wrote the play to be discussed below, produced secular Gaelic readers such as *An Treòraiche* ('The Leader') (1903) and *An Comb-Threòraiche* ('The Co-Leader') (1911).²⁷ MacFarlane, a 'measurer and land surveyor', born at Dalavich on Loch Awe and brought up in Paisley, was extremely active in Gaelic promotion.²⁸ Rather than the scriptural content of the earlier readers MacFarlane included practice passages on non-religious topics such as poetry:

Ach mo bheannachd air na bàird, agus barrachd cumhachd dhaibh. Mura b' e dilseachd nam bàrd cha bu bheò an diugh ar cànan aosda féin – a' Ghàidhlig bhinn, bhlasda, cànan seann rìghrean, maithean is mithean nan Gàidheal.

[But my blessing on the poets, and more power to them. If it weren't for the fidelity of the poets our ancient language would not be alive today – sweet, delicious Gaelic, the language of the old kings, nobles and common folk of the Gael.]²⁹

It is unsurprising, therefore, given the uneven history of teaching Gaelic-speaking children to read their own language, that the first ambitious imaginative Gaelic-language works specifically for children were plays rather than prose.³⁰ A Gaelic play could be performed by children who could speak but not read the language with ease, presumably a reality for the majority at the turn of the century. Indeed, we have evidence of this exact situation – English being the language of schooling in a strongly Gaelic-speaking area, but with use of Gaelic plays as a rare concession – from Ealasaid Chaimbeul/ Elizabeth Campbell's autobiography *Air Mo Chnairt* ('On My Way') (1982). Campbell, born in the Isle of Barra in 1913, details how difficult the absence of Gaelic at school was for children

like her who spoke no English, but also notes that at the upper end of primary school in the 1920s, when she would have been about 11, they performed a Gaelic play:

A-nis, anns an sgoil, thòisich sinn air gnothach ùr ionnsachadh – dealbh-chluich a dheilbh Dòmhnall Mac na Ceàrdaich [...] 'S e Ruaidhreachan an t-ainm a bh' oirre. Bha faoileag, feannag, clacharan, bean-shith, leanabh-sith agus bodach-sith innte. 'S e am maighstir-sgoile am bodach-sith, 's e a' cluich na fìdhle, agus mise Faoileag Bhàn Loch Grèine. Chòrd an gnothach fìor mhath ris an fheadhainn mhòr a thàinig dhan sgoil ga choimhead an oidhche a shealladh an toiseach e air an stage. [...] Thuit na glainneachan agam gu doirbh nuair a thuirt cailleach sa bhaile againn fhìr riom, "Rud gun dòigh – cò riamh a chuala cainnt aig faoileig neo aig feannaig neo clacharan?" Shaoil mi riamh gu robh i laghach chun an latha ud.

[Now, at school, we began to study a new subject – a play composed by Donald Sinclair. It was called Ruaidhreachan. The characters included a seagull, a crow, a stonechat, a fairy woman, a fairy child and a fairy old man. The schoolmaster took the role of the fairy old man, and he played the fiddle, and I was Faoileag Bhàn Loch Grèine ('The Fair Seagull of Loch Grèine'). The large number who came to the school to see it on the night that it was first put on stage enjoyed it immensely. I was brought back down to earth with a thud when an old lady from our own village said to me, "Nonsense – Who ever heard a seagull or crow or stonechat speak?" I'd always thought she was nice until that day.]³¹

Thus, Gaelic children's literature as we have it from the nineteenth and early twentieth century is very much a reflection of the treatment of the language in education. In that context, and in advance of a more in-depth study of Gaelic children's literature, we might surmise that, post-1872, Gaelic plays for children appear before other forms of imaginative prose for children as a direct result of the removal of the language from the education system. For those teachers who were inclined to use Gaelic at all as part of schooling, a play could be used with children who might otherwise have struggled to read for pleasure in Gaelic. Grant and MacFarlane hoped to inspire an awakening of love and devotion to Gaelic in children whose education was otherwise largely ignoring it.

Katherine Whyte Grant, *Dùsgadh na Fèinne* (1908)

Tha feum air na Fianntan; tha an dùthaich 'na frìth;
Tha Ghàidhlig dol bàs; cha'n eil daoine 'san tìr;
Nach 'eil Gaidheal an Albainn, no Gaidheal an cèin
a shéideas an dùdach 's a dhùisgeas an Fhèinn?

[The Fèinn are needed; the country is a deer forest;
Gaelic is dying; there are no people in the land;
Isn't there a Gael in Scotland or a Gael abroad
who will blow the horn and awaken the Fèinn?]³²

Grant (1845-1928) was brought up in Appin but was resident in Sydney, Australia when she wrote the play. Innes's recent study of her play and its context has shown that the tale of the *Fèinn* warriors 'on their elbows' waiting to be awoken is at the heart of her 'kinderspiel'.³³ The play contains a number of powerful messages for the audience on the decline of Gaelic in the Highlands and on the impact of estate-owner policy on the population; and opines that an awakening is badly needed. The tale of the sleeping *Fèinn* appears in the play as follows:

Dòmhnall – Nuair thig an t-àm, thig duine dhùisgeas iad. Bha, aon uair, gobhainn ann, d' am b' aithne 'n t-àite 's am bheil an Fhèinn 'nan laidhe. Rinn e iuchair a dh' fhosgail dha a' chreag. Ghabh e stigh is chunnaic e na suinn an sin 'nan suain; gach fear 'na éideadh-airm, le sgiath 's le chladheamh. Bha cuid dhiubh le cruit-chiùil a' bhàird r' an cliathaich. Dlùth air na suinn, bha dùdach mhòr 'na laidhe. Esan aig am biodh anail treun gu leòir, 's gu leòir de mhìsneach aige, an fheadag mhòr a chur r' a bhilean, agus, trì uairean thairis, séideadh thoirt dith gu làidir, coimhionta, chuireadh a ghairm na gaisgich air am bonnaibh, is thigeadh iad a mach gu

cathachadh an aghaidh nàmhaidhean Albann mar o shean. Thog an gobhainn an dùdach r' a bhilean is shéid e i. Lìonadh le fuaim an uaimh, is thug na Fianntan plaosgadh air an sùilean. An dara uair shéid e cho fad 's a bh' aige. Dh' éirich na suinn, le clisgeadh, air an uilinn. Le clisgeadh thilg an gobhainn uaith an fheadag; ghabh e na casan ás a dh' ionnsuidh 'n doruis, am feadh a ghlaodh na Fianntan le guth aimheil: "Is miosa dh' fhág na fhuair." Dhruideadh an dorus cloiche as déigh a' ghobhainn is thilg an gealtair air a chùl an iuchair; is riamh o'n latha sin cha 'n fhios do dhuine cò 'i a' chreag 'sam bheil an Fhéinn 'na cadal. Dé 'm fios nach ann 'sa chreig ud thall a tha iad!

[Donald – When the time comes, someone will awaken them. Once upon a time there was a blacksmith who knew where the *Fèinn* lay. He made himself a key that opened the rock for him. He went in and saw the heroes in a slumber; each in his armour, with a shield and sword. Some of them had a lyre at their side. Near to them lay a large horn. He who would have enough strong breath and enough courage to put the great whistle to his lips and blow perfectly and strongly three times would call the heroes to their feet, and they would come out to fight the enemy of Scotland as in olden times. The blacksmith put the horn to his lips and blew it. The cave was filled with noise, and the *Fèinn* opened their eyes. The second time he blew as hard as he could. The warriors rose up, all of a sudden, onto their elbows. With a start the blacksmith threw the horn down; He hightailed it out of the door while the *Fèinn* cried with grief, 'You've left us worse than you found us,' The stone door closed after the blacksmith and the coward threw the key behind him; Ever since that day no one knows in which rock the *Fèinn* sleep. They could even be in that rock over there!]³⁴

The play ends with the child characters promising to awaken the *Fèinn* by not forsaking the Gaelic language, and its associated culture, for the promise of wealth (associated with English).³⁵ This tension between language and economic advancement is also to the fore in MacFarlane's work.

Malcolm MacFarlane, *Am Mosgladh Mòr* (1914-15)

MacFarlane, using the pen-name *Caraid na Cloinne* ('Friend of the Children'), published the first part of *Am Mosgladh Mòr* in *The Celtic Monthly* in the summer of 1914. A 'Word from the Editor' (Annie M. MacKay?) of the periodical accompanied it. This explained that the play deals with a queen in an enchanted sleep and not the *Fèinn*, although their magical cauldron appears:

There is a Children's Gaelic Musical Play in existence, called "Dusgadh na Feinne" – "The Awakening of the Fians." It is by Mrs K. W. G. and is a creditable production of its kind. But it has failed to catch on. Two facts are against its rising in favour; it is a reproduction of real children's play, and it has rather much literary flavour about the words. Children love better to imitate grown people in their amusements and to affect the accomplishment of achievements. The following play differs from the other in respect of the words and music being both original and belonging equally to the plot. No attempt has been made after literary excellence. To have done so would have been a mistake. The plot is allegorical and propagandist. It is called "The Great Awakening", and shadows forth the denouement of the Gaelic movements, as hoped for by the enthusiast. A usurping Queen of The Rough Island has put the rightful Queen and her court under spells, and she and they lie in a cave which was once a palace, until, according to a certain prophecy, dwarfs return to the island and become the instruments for breaking those spells. The dwarfs land, meet the usurping Queen, overcome her guard, and expel her. They send a party throughout the island to discover the disenchantress who is fated to dissolve the spells under which the native Queen lies. They bring in seven alleged disenchantresses, and after a process of weeding out the false ones and burning their remedies in a cauldron – a bh' aig an Fhéinn mar thùisear: that the Fians had as an incense burner – the proper one is discovered. The leader of the dwarfs, by the use of cabalistic signs and words, opens the cave, the disenchantress does her work, the native Queen is restored to life along with her whole court, and, after a Grand "Salute", the dwarfs depart to the accompaniment of a "Farewell."³⁶

It is noteworthy that this editorial found fault with *Dùsgadh na Féinne*, since MacFarlane himself had helped Grant to prepare it.³⁷ Furthermore, the claim that the language register in MacFarlane's work is somehow easier, or not as literary, is not quite the whole truth. Indeed, it is arguable that in fact the opposite is the case and that of the two, *Dùsgadh na Féinne* is in more child-friendly language.

On publication of the second part of the play an introduction was added, noting that schoolchildren in two Highland areas were already working with it. It can be difficult to access evidence for the reception and performance of Gaelic children's plays from this period. Therefore, this introduction to the second part of *Am Mosgladh Mòr* is particularly useful as it adds to the evidence presented by Ealasaid Chaimbeul, above, for actual use of Gaelic plays in some Highland schools:

The Play called "Am Mosgladh Mòr", which appeared in the July, August and September issues of last year, was produced last winter by the children of Bunavulin School, Morvern, under the guidance and training of their teacher, Miss Harriet Stewart. It was taken up with great spirit by the children, and gave intense satisfaction to the audience of local people and strangers who came to hear it. We are glad to learn that Miss Juliet MacDonald, Cul-a'-bhaile, Fort William, is training children to produce it in that town. It is a desirable novelty, and should be encouraged by everybody who has the interests of Gaelic at heart. The author has now produced a continuation of the first part, and we have pleasure in giving an instalment in this issue. The Bunavulin children have already started to practice the songs.³⁸

This also gives us an insight into the central role played by women in encouraging Gaelic plays and other such pursuits among children, as the scholarship of Priscilla Scott has recently shown.³⁹ The 'redoubtable Harriet Stewart' (1866-1947) was from Clackmannan but 'she learned Gaelic from scratch in Morvern and made sure that all her pupils had a thorough grounding in the language. Out of her own pocket she took her pupils to provincial and national mods, where her tiny school featured prominently in the prize lists'.⁴⁰ Juliet MacDonald (1848-1942) spoke Gaelic as her first language and represented Lochaber on the Executive of An Comunn Gàidhealach.⁴¹

Am Mosgladh Mòr was reduced in its second edition, having won second prize at the Mòd in Greenock in 1925. In this excerpt from the beginning of the play (the longer 1914 text) we see how the premise was set up, and we also see how thinly-veiled the metaphor is for the interaction between English and Gaelic:

Dicheall Dearbhag (Banoglach) – Is maing cinneadh a tha fo mheachainn maithean a dhiobair an dualchas. Oir is diobradh dualchais diobradh uaisle. B' èibhinn an t-àm 'san robh sluagh an Eilein Ghairbh fo cheannas maithean a bha dileas do'n chrùn agus a dh'altruim beusan is beachdan an sinnsir. Ach, Och mo chreach! Thàinig Sagsa Mòruaill agus a ban-gheasadair, Sannta Nòir, agus chuir iad draoidheachd orra a thàlaidh iad bho am bànrighinn dhlighich féin gu ùmhlachd a dheanamh dhithse. Ghiùlain iad a h-airm; chog iad fo a brataich; is shiòlaidh iad as gu mòr. Ghabh Sannta Nòir fàth air ar Bànrighinn, agus chuir si fo gheasaibh i.

[Dicheall Dearbhag (Maid-servant) – Woe to the race who are ruled by the will of nobles who have forsaken their heritage. Since to forsake heritage is to forsake nobility. Delightful was the time when the people of Eilean Garbh ('Rugged Island') were led by nobles who were loyal to the crown and maintained the ways and ideas of their forefathers. But, oh my! Sagsa Mòruaill ('Saxa GreatPride') and her sorceress Sannta Nòir ('Greed ForGold') arrived and put them under a spell that tempted them away from their own rightful queen to pay homage to her. They bore arms for her, fighting under her flag; and they were greatly reduced. Sannta Nòir ambushed our queen, and placed a spell on her.]⁴²

The two Gaelic children's plays discussed here, *Dùsgadh na Féinne* and *Am Mosgladh Mòr*, bear witness to the efforts of two Gaelic writers to raise the consciousness of Highland children to the weakening of Gaelic and the straitened economic circumstances endured by the Highlands during the Celtic Revival period. They also represent something of a fightback against the denial of the language in education in Scotland by providing sympathetic Highland

teachers with published materials. The weakening of the Gaelic language was an ongoing issue in many regions of the Highlands due to the dire economic situation for the population therein, and with music and entertainment on stage these two writers hoped that children would hear the message. In both cases, the rejection of Gaelic for material gain related to acquisition of English is presented as the problem, ignoring, of course, the complexity of the reality facing the Highland population following a century of famine, clearance and emigration. Nonetheless, the plays exhorted young Gaels to awaken from the greedy slumber of English and to fight the cause of Gaelic and its culture. It might, of course, give pause for thought to remember that neither Grant and MacFarlane themselves were resident in the Highlands, as a result of economic out-migration, when they produced these children's plays encouraging the rejection of luxury and material gain in order to preserve Gaelic. The motif of the sleeping hero was popular among Celtic Revivalists in those years and could be easily adapted for Gaelic children's literature. Grant made use of a Gaelic folktale related to Fionn and his *Fèinn*. MacFarlane's play with its 'allegorical and propagandist' plot has a more complex relationship to earlier Gaelic tradition and is worthy of further study.

II: Literature in English: Ulster's heroes told to the children

The component tales of the Ulster and Finn Cycles⁴³ of medieval Gaelic literature are filled with the deeds of precocious children destined for greatness in their adult lives, with a specific category of stories, *macnímrada* or *macnímartha* ('boyhood deeds'), devoted to the youthful exploits of Fionn mac Cumhaill⁴⁴ and Cù Chulainn, the 'Hound of Ulster'.⁴⁵ The latter tales, in which the five-year-old child defeats two-thirds of the older, 150-strong *macrad* ('boy-troop') which surrounds the fortress of Emain Macha (court of his uncle, Conchobor, king of Ulster); wrestles and mutilates – aged six – a ferocious guard-dog (whose former protection of the province of Ulster he is then bound to emulate); and beheads – aged seven – three brothers who claimed formerly to have 'killed more of the Ulstermen than are left alive',⁴⁶ occur within the wider framework of the longest of the Ulster-Cycle stories, the c. 12th century *Táin Bó Cúailnge* ('The Cattle-Raid of Cooley').⁴⁷ It is clear, however, that, despite the extreme youth of their protagonist, there is nothing inherently naïve or childish in Cù Chulainn's behaviour, and the stories themselves are not related to other children, but to the warriors of neighbouring Connacht – poised to assault Ulster's border and steal its prized brown bull, Donn Cúailnge – in order to heighten their fear of the now fully-grown man whom they must shortly face in battle.⁴⁸

In fact, the extent to which such stories, prior to the Celtic Revival (c. 1880-c. 1930), would ever have been directed towards an audience as youthful as Cù Chulainn himself remains unclear. We know little of the circumstances of their contemporary performance within the oral traditions of medieval Ireland and Gaelic Scotland. Their earliest written copies occur firmly within the highly professional, adult environment of the scholars who created and compiled, during the twelfth to fifteenth centuries, the 'Great Books' of Gaelic literature such as *Lebor Laignech* ('Book of Leinster'), *Lebor na hUidre* ('Book of the Dun Cow'), and *Lebor Buidhe Leacain* ('Yellow Book of Lecan').⁴⁹ During the Celtic Revival, however, a clear interest in the suitability of these characters for (re)presentation as child-oriented heroes and heroines becomes apparent, in the pages of beautifully-illustrated compendia of 'myth and legend' as much, most dramatically, as in the classrooms of St Enda's School, Dublin, founded by Patrick Pearse (1879-1916) as a 'Boy Republic' inspired by the *macrad* of Emain itself.⁵⁰ Such endeavours were not, however, conducted in isolation, but as part of a widespread Revival movement – encompassing Ireland as well as Scotland – whose aims included, as we have seen, the awakening of Gaels from their long-term political apathy, the promotion of the Gaelic languages, and deepening awareness for those denied formal education in the latter of the inspirational deeds of hitherto-neglected literary ancestors. The majority of Scottish authors producing stories inspired by older Gaelic literature – many of which were not composed in Gaelic, since their authors rarely spoke it⁵¹ – were part of a network of Revivalist writers active on both sides of the Irish Sea, most of whom were acquainted with each other and often taking inspiration from the same existing translations of medieval Gaelic tales. Paisley-born William Sharp (1855-1905), for example, corresponded extensively with W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and Lady Augusta Gregory (1852-1932), as, in fact, did Sharp's alter-ego, 'Fiona Macleod'. Works by luminaries of the Gaelic League, like Douglas Hyde (1860-1949) and Standish James O'Grady (1846-1928), were published in Scottish periodicals, notably "Scoto-Celtic outburst"⁵² *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal*, established in Edinburgh in 1895 by author, publisher, biologist, and philanthropic visionary Patrick Geddes (1854-1932) as a fundamental part of his "campaign for a Scottish cultural renaissance".⁵³ Ella Young's (1867-1956) *Celtic Wonder Tales* (1910), illustrated by Maud Gonne (1866-1953), inspired a number of works by Scottish Symbolist artist John Duncan (1866-1945).⁵⁴ In an English-language context, rather than Gaelic, it is sometimes harder to distinguish the intended audience of published items

(particularly, as we shall see, those of Scottish derivation), or to discern the extent of their reception. Many, moreover, were published in London, rather than Dublin or Edinburgh. Their subjects, too – Fionn mac Cumhaill, Cù Chulainn, heroes of the ‘Red Branch’ like the Sons of Uisliu, Fergus, and Deirdre – may be described, often within the same narrative, as operating between the landscapes of both Scotland and Ireland, and equally at home in either (a factor apparent in medieval sources as well as contemporary).

Similar ambiguity may extend to whether or not a particular Revival-era text was intended for children, or whether, in fact, the bowdlerization of episodes from particular authors’ sources arises rather from late-Victorian squeamishness anent levels of bloodshed or sexual misconduct deemed newly inappropriate for all. Some authors strove primarily for completeness, or slightly pedantic precision, in assembling what were often judged dismissively as scattered, poorly-cared-for ‘fragments’ of older literature – painting themselves, in the process, as its saviours,⁵⁵ but providing little clarity *vis-à-vis* intended readership. Charles Squire, whose preface to *The Mythology of the British Islands: An introduction to Celtic myth, legend, poetry and romance* (1905) identifies only “the English reader” as his target audience, complains at greater length than earlier translations:

Cover a portion only of the whole ground, [and], in addition, contain little elucidatory matter. [Their heroes’] characters stand alone and unexplained; and the details that would explain them must be sought for with considerable trouble in the lectures and essays of scholars to learned societies.⁵⁶

Eleanor Hull’s *Cuchullin Saga* (1898) styled itself with similar authority as “a collection of stories relating to the hero Cuchillín [sic], translated from the Irish by various scholars”, with an introductory essay emphasising the “literary qualities of the saga”, claimed of comparable worth to the “Epics of the Nibelungen, of Charlemagne, or of Arthur”.⁵⁷ Hull (1860-1935), however – born in England of Irish extraction and a founding member of the Irish Texts Society in 1899 – produced another version of Cù Chulainn’s life retold explicitly for children, which differed significantly from her earlier work.⁵⁸ Her preface to *Cuchulainn, the Hound of Ulster* (1909), advises that, this time, it “does not aim at being a text-book, but a book written for the pleasure of the young”, with which she has taken greater liberties than before, “introduc[ing] new details which add to the beauty and striking effect of [the tales’] most touching episode[s]”.⁵⁹ The volume was retitled for its American edition, with the same foreword, as *The Boys’ Cuchulainn: Heroic legends of Ireland*.⁶⁰ Little material alteration, however, despite her alleged shift in audience, was made to the tales’ basic content between each one, though Hull did excise from *Cuchulainn, the Hound of Ulster* the most overtly sensual moment of the boy’s adolescence – when the women of Ulster are sent to cool the ardour of his first *riastrad* (‘battle-frenzy’) by exposing their breasts – retaining only the “three [successive] baths of cold water” into which, stunned with embarrassment, he may then be plunged.⁶¹

This second collection, however, included the story of Deirdre and the Sons of Uisliu – Yeats’ renowned ‘Deirdre of the Sorrows’⁶² – whose presentation during the Revival is already more complex than Cù Chulainn’s,⁶³ and is complicated further still when the question of her suitability for juvenile readers is addressed, or alluded to indirectly, by a small collection of contemporary sources which depict her. The rest of this chapter will explore her depiction by Hull, by Lady Gregory’s *Cuchulainn of Muirthemne* (1902) – both of which were published in London by Irish writers, but set primarily in Scotland – by Fiona Macleod’s *The Laughter of Peterkin* (1897), and *Deirdre and the Sons of Usna* (1903), and by Edinburgh-based Louey Chisholm’s ‘Star-Eyed Deirdre’ in her *Celtic Tales Told to the Children* (1910). Each of these depictions – whose intended readership is not always clear – share at least one common source, namely Lismore-born, Edinburgh-based Alexander Carmichael’s *Deirdre*, obtained in its original Scottish Gaelic from the recitation of John Macneill, an 83-year-old cottar from the island of Barra, published in Gaelic, then in English translation by Carmichael, in the *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness* in 1888-89.⁶⁴ Attention will be paid to each of these authors’ attitudes towards their respective Deirdres, their audience (if known), and their decisions concerning the more potentially problematic episodes of her life in the sources on which each one depends.

The oldest Deirdre: *Longes mac n-Uislenn* (‘The exile of Uisliu’s sons’)

Her popularity amongst Revivalist writers as Gaeldom’s most famous beauty, the tragic heroine of the greatest of their romances (“the Helen of the Gael”),⁶⁵ is already at odds with the multifaceted narrative of Deirdre’s depiction

within a wide variety of older sources, spanning Ireland and Gaelic Scotland alike, ranging in date from the ninth to the early eighteenth centuries. The oldest of these depictions, *Longes mac n-Uislenn* ('The exile of Uisliu's sons'), recorded in *Lebor Laignech* (c. 1160), is also set at the court of Conchobor, Ulster's king.⁶⁶ It describes a disastrous series of events emanating from his decision, against his warriors' advice, to preserve the life of a new-born girl prophesied to bring only death and destruction upon the province, should she be allowed to survive. Like Cù Chulainn, she is also precocious, uttering a terrible scream from her still-pregnant mother's womb which first alerts the court to her potentially malign effect upon their company (her name in its oldest form, *Derdrethar* or *Deirdriu*, means 'disruption', or 'one who resounds/ causes resonance').⁶⁷ The arrogance of Conchobor's conviction that his interference will assuage this threat is motivated chiefly by lust, since her tremendous beauty is also foretold, and the girl is confined to a secluded *lios* (secure enclosure), so that no other man might be tempted by her presence until she has reached a suitable age to be brought to the king, when "she will be[come] the woman (*ben*) who will be in my company".⁶⁸ When a trouble-making female poet, Leborcham, flouts Conchobor's authority and introduces the nearly-grown girl to Noísiu, Ainnle, and Ardán – the three Sons of Uisliu – she compels the brothers, by invoking a *geasa* ('tabu') against them,⁶⁹ to remove her from the king's jurisdiction, and accompanies their *fian* ('warrior-band') from Ulster into Scotland. A briefly peaceful interlude is shattered when the exiles are betrayed by their former ally, Fergus mac Róich (himself misled by Conchobor's assurance that he means only to welcome the brothers home), and return to Ireland to meet their immediate deaths. Deirdre, forced at last to submit to the king's desire but refusing to speak to him, grieves a full year for the Sons of Uisliu instead, killing herself accidentally whilst attempting to escape the king a second time.

The basic narrative of *Longes mac n-Uislenn* developed gradually, with often differing emphasis placed upon the characters' roles within each later version, several of which are explicitly Scottish. A tale of at least some similarity was known in Scotland from an early stage: a fifteenth-century manuscript sets the exiles' bucolic refuge firmly in Argyll,⁷⁰ whilst another suggests that Deirdre gave birth to two children, Gaiar and Aebgráine, who survived their parents' deaths and were fostered safely by the lord of Emain Ablach (Arran, 'island of the apple trees').⁷¹ Overall, however, the exiles' lives remain short and innately violent, with variations on the brothers' demise including freezing to death in the waves of an enchanted flood, burning alive, and simultaneous beheading with a very long sword, with the manner of Deirdre's prolonged process of grief including drinking blood from their wounds *post-mortem* and throwing herself in the same grave.⁷² By the beginning of the nineteenth century, partly in consequence of the so-called Ossianic Controversy (see below), Deirdre's name had become, in Scotland primarily, an exemplar for great love, inevitable tragedy, and overwhelming grief.⁷³

It is unsurprising, therefore, that Revival-era writers on both sides of the Irish Sea also found in Deirdre and the Sons of Uisliu characters whose proven flexibility could represent a wide variety of sentiments relevant to their own creative endeavours, from youth blighted by authoritarian repression, the pain of exile from one's native land, and, ultimately, the devastating impact of thwarted idealism and lost hope.⁷⁴ Each of these elements may be discerned within the work of Scottish and Irish writers, in nearly thirty plays, novellas, and epic poems composed upon the general theme of Deirdre's short life between c. 1880 and the 1920s ('Fiona Macleod' exclaimed approvingly that "the name of Deirdre has been as a lamp to a thousand poets").⁷⁵ The tragedy of her own experience was often heightened further still by its combination with two other *oidheadha* ('violent death tales') of later-medieval origin, following the example set by Eugene O'Curry's convenient rendition of the so-called *Trí Thruaige na Scélaigheachta* ('Three sorrows of storytelling') into English, in 1862-63.⁷⁶ The majority of these Deirdres were not presented exclusively to one or other audience, but almost every item varies significantly from its authors' acknowledged inspiration, and most, whatever their intended readership may be seen to have imposed what Murray Pittock has described as the 'three pillars' – "symbols, perfection, and death"⁷⁷ – of late-Victorian Neo-Jacobitism, alongside a high-minded, often moralizing tone anent episodes of particular disturbance in their characters' lives. As noted above, some were also addressed explicitly – bizarre as this may seem! – towards juvenile readers, with each of the latter expressing its debt to Carmichael's *Deirdire* (not, itself, of obvious dedication either way).

Lady Gregory, *Cuchulainn of Muirthemne* (1902), and Eleanor Hull, *Cuchulain, Hound of Ulster* (1909)

Lady Gregory's Deirdre-tale in her *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*⁷⁸ – more than half of which is set in Scotland – does not hang itself explicitly upon the peg of 'Children's Literature', but was certainly envisaged as being of value to younger readers.⁷⁹ It is influenced too, at least in part, by the hope of recreating the atmosphere of her own childhood

nurse's simplified versions of Ulster-Cycle tales.⁸⁰ An obvious departure from *Longes mac n-Uislenn* is her regularization of the poorly-defined and unorthodox liaisons between Conchobor, Deirdre, and the three Sons of Usna. Her Conchobor intends, explicitly, to make the girl his wife, a role linked firmly to her provision of the best possible level of care for king and court alike: her hesitation in accepting his proposal of marriage is framed as reluctance that "she was young yet, and had no knowledge of the duties of a wife, or the ways of a king's house". Securing his agreement to a year's postponement of their wedding, the king engages the services of "a woman teacher" to instruct her, and "nice, fine, pleasant, [and] modest maidens to be with her at her lying down and her rising up, to be companions to her".⁸¹ The presence of Leborcham during Deirdre's childhood, far from the lurking threat she exudes in *Longes mac n-Uislenn* – her access to the *lios* cannot be denied, for fear of her satires upon the king's misconduct⁸² – is also his own choice, as the nurse-maid requested to supervise the comfort of her secluded home, and the knowledge she imparts to the girl is explicitly benign ("there was not a blade of grass growing from root, or a bird singing in the wood, or a star shining from heaven, but [that] Deirdre had the name of it").⁸³ As a woman she is chastised, even by Naoise [sic], for speaking immodestly: an attempt to convey her misgivings regarding the sincerity of Conchobor's offer to return to Ulster is met with the request that she restrict herself, in future, to the "kind, gentle words" with which she swiftly attempts to placate his annoyance.⁸⁴ In her lament for their deaths, Deirdre refers to Conchobor as "the High King of Ulster, my first betrothed, [whom] I forsook for love of Naoise".⁸⁵ It is surprising, therefore, that amidst her restrained and highly civilized environment Lady Gregory does not also omit Deirdre's presence from the brothers' death-scene – they are beheaded simultaneously with a sword which "leaves nothing after it, [neither] track nor trace" of the wound⁸⁶ – though she is careful to note that her contact with Naoise's corpse thereafter is both accidental, and subject to the direst of consequence:

[She] gave three kisses to him, and when her mouth touched his blood the colour of burning sods came into her cheeks, and she rose up like one that had lost her wits, and she went on through the night till she came to where the waves were breaking on the strand.⁸⁷

Instead of leaping from a moving chariot, so that her skull is shattered to fragments,⁸⁸ she stabs herself discreetly on the beach with a stolen knife, then "drew it out again and threw it in the sea to her right hand, the way [that] no one else would be blamed for her death".⁸⁹

Lady Gregory's sources are revealed, by her diaries, as "a bundle of 'Trische Texte'"⁹⁰ donated by Douglas Hyde,⁹¹ and Carmichael's *Deirdre*, from which she has borrowed both the year-long deferral of Deirdre's wedding to the king, and her insistence that she receive adequate training for the role of wife (his "modest maidens", in particular, are imported verbatim to *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*).⁹² The almost bloodless nature of the brothers' deaths is also borrowed,⁹³ as is Carmichael's presentation of Deirdre, even during the onslaught of the magical flood, as the epitome of a demure, well-mannered young lady. Carmichael's English translation is littered with alterations to his informant John Macneill's original Gaelic,⁹⁴ one of the most telling of which occurs when the brothers attempt to protect her from the effects of the surging waves. Macneill's statement that Naoise "set Deirdre on his shoulders with a leg on either side of his neck" becomes in the printed translation: "Naoise placed [her] on the summit of his shoulders"⁹⁵ – with the English version implying, as Alan Bruford observed, that she "sits side-saddle rather than astride" him, and removing the possibility of "offend[ing] Victorian sensibilities by mentioning a lady's legs"⁹⁶

Carmichael's version was similarly influential to Eleanor Hull's Deirdre-tale in her explicitly child-friendly *Cuchulain, Hound of Ulster* (aka *The Boys' Cuchulain*).⁹⁷ She replicates, for example, the gentler, bloodless nature of the brothers' demise, as well as Carmichael's insistence that Deirdre's feminine decorum be strictly maintained:

A grey stormy sea [arose] before the Sons of Usna on the green plain. The three heroes tied their clothing behind their heads, and Naisi [sic] set Deirdre upon his shoulder and went straight on without flinching, without turning back, through the grey shaggy sea, lifting Deirdre on high *lest she should wet her feet*. 'Thy spell is good', said Conor, 'yet it sufficeth not [...]. Then the Druids froze the grey uneven sea into jagged hard lumps of rugged ice, like the sharpness of swords on one side of them and like the stinging of serpents on the other side. Then Arden cried out that he was becoming exhausted and must fain give up. 'Come thou, Arden, and rest against my shoulder', said Naisi, 'and I will support you'. Arden did so, but it was not long before he died; but though he was dead, Naisi held him up still. Then Ainle cried out that he could go no longer,

for his strength had left him. When Naisi heard that, he heaved a heavy sigh as of one dying of fatigue, but he told Ainle to hold onto him, and he would bring him soon to land. But not long after, the weakness of death came upon Ainle, and his hold relaxed. Naisi looked on either hand and when he saw that his two brothers were dead, he cared not whether he himself should live or die. He heaved a sigh, sore as the sigh of the dying, and his heart broke and he fell dead.⁹⁸

Hull's rendition of the tale is divided into five discrete episodes, each with their own title, parts three ("The Sleep-Wanderer"), four ("The Wiles of King Conor"), and five ("The Sorrowful death of Usna's Sons") of which provide further support for her dependence upon Carmichael.⁹⁹ She complains explicitly, moreover, of the unsuitability for her present audience – children – of many features of "the oldest version [of my tale], found in the Book of Leinster [*Longes mac n-Uislenn*]", which is "much ruder and more barbaric" than the rest,¹⁰⁰ and rejects similarly distasteful aspersions made, conversely, by one of its latest-known copies¹⁰¹ (that Deirdre's liaison with Conchobor was consummated, repeatedly, prior to her departure for Scotland with the Sons of Uisliu).¹⁰² Even one of the most famous, though certainly macabre, episodes of *Longes mac n-Uislenn* has been excluded in part from Hull's tale, and she comments somewhat meta-textually upon the unlikelihood of the oldest version's accuracy, for a girl of her own heroine's clear refinement. *Longes mac n-Uislenn* reads:

Once upon a time, moreover, the maiden's foster-father was skinning a weaned calf on snow outside in the winter, to cook it for her [meal]. She saw a raven drinking the blood on the snow. Then she said to Leborcham: 'Beloved would be the one man on whom might be yonder three colours, that is hair like the raven, a cheek like blood, and a body like snow'. 'Dignity and good fortune to you!' said Leborcham, 'he is not far from you. He is inside [the *lios*] near to you, even Noísiu son of Uisliu'. 'I will not be well, indeed', she said, 'until I see him'.¹⁰³

Hull opines, however – and uniquely – that her Deirdre has no need of such sinister visions, since she and Naisi are depicted as childhood friends, when they used to play catch with a golden ball. The sweetness of this memory, a comfort to her present isolation in the secluded *lios*, has been spoiled by the recent arrival of the king, whose presence has intruded itself upon the innocence of their former connection:

But [now] when he flings the ball for me to catch, □ tis ever the same thing. King Conor [sic] comes between and seizes it, and throws it back at Naisi. So can I never catch and hold it in my hands, and I am vexed and weep. But last night, O good nurse, King Conor flung the ball craftily at his head, and Naisi fell all red and stained with blood, *like that poor calf that Caffa slew, thinking that I could eat it for my food. The tender little calf that played with me!* Upon the winter's frosty floor I saw its blood, all crimson-red upon the driven snow, and as I looked I saw a raven that stooped down to sip the blood; and, O dear nurse, I thought of Naisi then, for all his hair, as I remember it, was dark and glossy like the raven's wing, and in his cheeks the ruddy glow of health and beauty, like the blood, and white his skin like snow. Dear nurse, dear nurse, let me see Naisi once again, and send the King away.¹⁰⁴

Hull's other, most overt departure from almost every earlier version is the softening of the typically extreme tension which attends the moment of Deirdre's pre-natal shriek, when the assembled Ulstermen leap up from their feast and seize their weapons in horrified alarm, and when the ghastly revelation by Conchobor's adviser, Cathbad, of the suffering and copious bloodshed she is fated to cause inspires even her own father, Feidlimid, to insist upon her death.¹⁰⁵ Hull, instead, removes the motif of the 'unquiet womb', having Cathbad make his prophecy for curiosity's sake, to "find out her destiny" when word of her birth is brought to the feast.¹⁰⁶ Though her death is still suggested as a practical response, the threat itself is expressed with none of the vivid language used elsewhere ("not to her parents will this child bring ill, but to the province, and to Ulster's kings and chiefs").¹⁰⁷ Uniquely, the child is brought to the hall to be judged directly by the king, and charms him in the style of any normal infant:

The babe came all swathed in white and lying, soft and fair, within her nurse's arms. And when the infant saw the lights and heard the sounds of singing, she was pleased, and puckered up her baby face and looked up at the King and crowed and smiled. The King was moved to gentleness; he rose up from his seat and took the babe out of her nurse's arms and loudly he proclaimed

before them all: "The prophecies and omens of the seers I do most strictly honour and believe [...] yet will I not believe that any good can come of an ignoble act. No man or hero of a noble mind for his own good would slay a helpless babe, [so] neither then for the good of Ulster shall this foul, cowardly deed be done."¹⁰⁸

The marriage he proposes then, and the girl's upbringing "in my own way", are framed solely as an additional means of protecting the kingdom; throughout her childhood, Deirdre refers to the king as 'Father'.

Fiona Macleod, *The Laughter of Peterkin: A retelling of Old Tales of the Celtic Wonderworld* (1897), and Louey Chisholm, *Celtic Tales Told to the Children* (1910)

One other, Carmichael-inspired Scottish tale of Deirdre and the three Sons of Uisliu is addressed explicitly to a juvenile audience.¹⁰⁹ Commissioned in the spring of 1897, destined for the Christmas market,¹¹⁰ Fiona Macleod's 'Darthool and the Sons of Usna' is placed beside versions of the two other 'Sorrows of Storytelling', 'The four white swans',¹¹¹ and 'The fate of the Sons of Turenn'.¹¹² A frame-tale, 'The laughter of Peterkin', is given in preface, personifying the tales' ideal reader as a child enchanted by "many tales of old times", of which these particular three were his favourites, since "he found [there] pre-eminently the haunting charm and sad exquisite beauty which are the colour and fragrance of the Celtic genius".¹¹³ 'Peterkin' is depicted by Fiona as a generic child intrigued by such older tales ("he stands, indeed, for many children rather than for one, for many lives and not an individual merely"),¹¹⁴ whose tastes are yet subject to change. A certain distance from the days of his youth is implied already by Fiona's omniscient narrative voice – and a distinction made, perhaps, between the most suitable audience for the 'Three Sorrows' – as Peterkin "is [now] a man", who has "turned with *deeper emotion* to tales such as 'Dermid and Grainne', or 'The Amadan Mor' ['Great Fool']", and yet still "of those early favourites he loved to think, loved to re-read, to hear again, [and] to re-tell. That is why, therefore, I have chosen to make this book."¹¹⁵ The distinction between appropriate age-groups is alluded to once again by the manner of Peterkin's very earliest acquaintance with the substance of the 'Three Sorrows', since they were not at first revealed to him directly but overheard, when his parents' friend, Ian Mor ['Big John'],¹¹⁶ was telling them to his wife – only later, "when he was old enough to follow aright, Ian Mor told him, anew and in his own way, the three famous tales which follow".¹¹⁷ Each of Fiona's versions of the 'Three Sorrows' is framed by the narrative of Ian Mor, speaking to Peterkin, who is provided also with a brief, educational history of Deirdre's presentation elsewhere:

The story I will tell you now, Peterkin, is more beautiful, though not so old [as those of Lir's and Turenn's children]. In all the regions of the Gael throughout Scotland, and in every isle, from Arran and Islay in the south, to Iona in the west, and Tiree in mid-sea, and the Outer Hebrides, there is no story of the old far-off days so well known as that of Darthool. She it is who in Ireland is called Deirthrê or Deirdrê; and in Ireland [also] to this day there is not a cowherd who has not heard of Deirdrê. Her beauty filled the old world of the Gael with a sweet, wonderful, and abiding rumour. The name of Darthool has been as a lamp to a thousand poets. In a land of heroes and brave and beautiful women, how shall one name survive? Yet to this day and for ever, men will remember her, the torch of men's thoughts.¹¹⁸

Fiona's chosen name for her heroine, 'Darthool', and her substitution of 'Nathos' for Noísiu or Naisi, implies an unacknowledged debt to James Macpherson's Ossianic poem *Dar-thula*, published alongside his *Fingal, an ancient epic poem in six books* (1765) and credited, notoriously, to Ossian, son of Fionn mac Cumhaill.¹¹⁹ Its brief history of Deirdre herself aside, however, the defining characteristic of Ian Mor's / Fiona's preface is its emphasis upon the tale's enduring beauty, and its insistence that the child Peterkin must also serve this irresistible cause, in order to inhabit the tale and its characters' lives most fully:

For beauty is the most excellent sweet thing in all the world, and though of it a few perish, and a myriad die from knowing nothing of it, beneath it the nations of men move forward as their one imperishable star. Therefore he who adds to the beauty of the world is of the sons of God. He who destroys or debases beauty is of the darkness, and shall have darkness for his reward. The day will come, Peterkin, when you will find a rare and haunting music in these names. They will bring you a lost music, a lost world, and imperishable beauty. You will dwell with them, till you

love Darthool as did the sons of Usna, and would die for her, or live to see her starry eyes [...]. I will tell you the story as it is told in the old chronicles, and if I add aught to it, that shall only be what I myself heard when I was young, and had from the lips of an old woman, Barabal Mac-Aodh, who was my nurse. She came out of Tíree or Coll, I forget which.¹²⁰

Despite its preface, however, and its unusually overt emphasis upon appealing to childish minds, 'Darthool and the Sons of Usna' adheres far more strictly to Fiona's designated sources for the older Deirdre-tale than one might expect. The latter are named as Alexander Cameron's transcription of the fifteenth-century Glenmasan manuscript in *Reliquiae Celticae* (1894), and Douglas Hyde's poetical rendition in his *Three Sorrows of Story-telling* (1895),¹²¹ but it is clear from William's introduction to the centenary edition of Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* (1896) that he and Carmichael corresponded,¹²² and Fiona's debt to *Deirdre* is as clear as Hull's in *Cuchalain, the Hound of Ulster*, and Gregory's in *Cuchulainn of Muirthemne*, especially in the manner of her death-scene (see below). Nonetheless, there is little of Carmichael's emphasis upon modesty or maidenly good conduct within 'Darthool', and despite the often cloying note of florid sentimentality introduced throughout, Fiona's text remains littered with the kind of lurid detail of which Hull's rendition, for example, has been stripped almost completely. The foretelling of Deirdre's terrible impact upon Ulster is depicted graphically by Fiona's prophet:

Behold the vision of Cathbad the Druid, who is old and nigh unto death. And what is before mine eyes is a sea, a sea of flowing crimson, a sea of blood. Foaming it rises, and wells forth, and overflows, and drowns great straths and valleys, and laves the flanks of high hills, and from the summits of mountains pours down upon the lands of the Gael in a thundering flood, blood-red to the blood-red sea.¹²³

Deirdre's father, Felim, continues to insist upon his own daughter's death ("It would be better to slay the child than to drown the land in blood"),¹²⁴ and though something of Hull's Deirdre's aversion to the calf's death is also present here, Fiona's rendition of the girl's vision retains the vivid colours of its oldest telling, and concludes with an oddly sensual hint that Deirdre herself, on the cusp of adolescence, has grasped already the implications of Noísiu's imminent appearance in her life:

One daw the first snows came over the hills of the north and fell upon the forest... For joy Darthool clapped her hands, as she stood upon the wall of the lios. Then, glancing downward, she beheld the woman who was her attendant standing beside a calf that had been slain for the provisioning of those within the fort. The red blood streamed over the snow, and was as the crimson cloak of an Ultonian chief there, till the red grew mottled as it sank through the frozen whiteness. Darthool's eyes *ever saddened at the sight of blood*, but after a brief while she knew that there was no harm in that shedding, and that no omen of further bloodspilling lay therein. While she was still looking thereon, a great raven, glossy black and burnished in the sun rays, came gliding swift across the snow, and alit by the slain calf, and drank of the warm bright blood. *Of a sudden Darthool laughed low.*¹²⁵

The scene's significance for Fiona is also implied by the fact that it is the only one for which an **illustration** is provided. Drawn by Yorkshire-born artist Sunderland Rollinson (1872-1950), the black-and-white sketch is subtitled 'A great raven, glossy, black, and burnished in the sun's rays'; it depicts the slaughtered calf in the central foreground, a pool of blood emerging from its mouth, whilst Deirdre observes it calmly. Further thinly-veiled sensuality attends her actual meeting with Nathos. Catching his first glimpse of the girl:

Love rose suddenly within him like a flame: a red flame was it that was in his heart, and a white flame in his mind, and out of these two flames is wrought the love of love and the passion of passion and the dream of dreams.¹²⁶

He declares:

Thou hast not seen the sea: but there, when the tide flows, there is nothing, there is no one, in all the world, which can say it nay. So is my love for thee, that now rises; and, once thine, will be thine evermore.¹²⁷

Following their declaration of mutual love the girl, uninvited:

Moved forward and put her honeysweet lips against the mouth of Nathos, and made his blood leap, and a flame come into his eyes, and a trembling come into his limbs. Then, as though with that kiss she had become as a wild rose, she stood swaying lightly, her fair face delicately aflame. Nathos put his arms about her, and kissed her on the brow and on the lips.¹²⁸

Agreeing to remove her from the enclosure, and from the king's jurisdiction, Nathos and Darthool embark upon a two-day journey through the wilderness to reach the safety of his brothers' castle. Lying down together, "for the last hour of the dark they rested a brief while, lying close-hid among the bracken", where they fall asleep;¹²⁹ in the morning:

Came the first sun rays rippling, dancing, leaping, from amid the crested heights and peaks to the eastward, and Nathos awoke. For some moments he lay breathless with wonder. Darthool, in all her radiant beauty, was by his side, her golden hair ablaze in the sunlight, and her face like a flower amid the bracken. It was too great a wonder [but, fearing discovery should they linger] he put his dream away from him, and stooped and kissed Darthool upon the lips. With a cry she awoke and put her arms about him.¹³⁰

None of these scenes, nor the lush subtlety of their phrasing, are borrowed from any of Fiona's sources, most especially Carmichael. Douglas Hyde's description of his Deirdre's prophesied beauty:

I see two shining stars – they are her eyes.
I see a web of silk – it is her hair,
I see a trunk of ivory – her neck,
A double shower of white pearls – her teeth¹³¹

has clearly inspired Fiona's, but hers is overlain, once again, with a darkly suggestive tone:

Two stars I see shining in a web of dusk... the shining stars are her eyes, and the web of dusk is the flower-fragrant maze of her hair, that low tower of ivory is her fair, white, wonderful neck, and her white teeth are these pearls, and *that strange crimson fruit* is no other than her smiling mouth – a little smiling mouth with life and death upon it because of its laughter and grave stillness.¹³²

All of Deirdre's other visions, premonitions of the blood-soaked outcome of the brothers' misplaced trust in the king's forgiveness, are also retained by Fiona, reproduced from Cameron's text of the Glenmasan manuscript, in which they are first extant, via the medium of Douglas Hyde's poem.¹³³ The third of these visions ("Listen [Nathos], I pray thee: I see thine own shadow creeping up thee, and a dark cloud overhead, and a cloud of clotted blood it is by the same token")¹³⁴ is followed swiftly by the brothers' actual deaths, achieved here too via simultaneous beheading.¹³⁵ Deirdre's behaviour thereafter is a far cry from both the single kiss bestowed upon the bloodless, frozen corpse of Naisi by Eleanor Hull,¹³⁶ and Lady Gregory's reproving hint of caution against unwise, unwomanly behaviour (as above).¹³⁷ Fiona's rendition is faithful initially to Glenmasan, uniting Deirdre momentarily with Cù Chulainn himself, making a brief, regrettably tardy cameo appearance in the exiles' death-tale. Fearing imminent recapture by the king, she turns her back upon the brothers' headless, crumpled corpses, but then declares:

"I do not wish to live, but I wish to live yet a brief hour, and not to be taken in shameful life before the eyes of Concobar [sic]". So [she and Cù Chulainn] returned to where the dead lay. Darthool fell upon her knees, and spread out the glory of her hair, and put her lips to the blood-wet lips of Nathos. [After lamenting them] Darthool stooped, and lifted the head of Nathos, and cleaned it of blood and foam, and the sweats of death, and kissed the eyes and the lips, and put

her love upon the dear face, and her sorrow upon it, and her grief upon it, and put it to her white breast, and to her lips again, and gave it again her grief and her love. Then at the bidding of Cuchulain [sic] three graves were digged. In each grave a son of Usna was placed, and as each stood there his head was placed upon his shoulders. But the grave of Nathos was made wider. Darthool stood therein and held his hands in hers, and put her lips often to his lips, and often whispered to him. One other death there was in that hour, and in that place.¹³⁸

The often bleak, bloody, and understatedly suggestive tone of ‘Darthool and the Sons of Usna’ vindicates Ian Mor’s decision to present it to Peterkin at an appropriate moment of his childhood. It is interesting to note, however, that ‘Fiona Macleod’ herself expressed marked dissatisfaction with the book – specifically its frame-tale format, and consequent disharmony between prologue and main course – soon after publication. Writing to an American correspondent on May 3, 1898, she urged him to approach a number of new publishers on her behalf, in hopes of getting leave to reconstruct it:

If chance should take you to Boston I wish you would ask Mr. Lamson (Lamson Wolfe & Co.) or Copeland & Day or Houghton Mifflin & Co. if they would care to issue an American edition — either as it stands or without the Peterkin prologue and interludes — and in the latter case (*which for some reasons I should prefer*) under the title “The Three Sorrows of Old”, or “Heroic Tales of the Celt”, or “The Story of Deirdre the Beautiful”.¹³⁹

Another letter to Portland-based publisher Thomas B. Mosher confirms this:

And now one more suggestion for your consideration — in connection with the only other book of mine that has [still] not been reprinted in America. This book, in any reissue, I should call ‘Old Tales Retold’ or else ‘Heroic Tales of the Gael’. The book was published as a Christmas book under the title “The Laughter of Peterkin” — *a hopeless misnomer, and with much superfluous setting*. The gist of the book consists of the three favourite Gaelic heroic tales, retold by me: the famous tale of Deirdre and the Sons of Usna — the Tale of the Heroical Quest of the Sons of Turenn — and the Tale of the Swan-Children of Lir: the first and last, in particular, in their Gaelic originals, having been loved by every generation of Irish and Scottish Gaeldom for over a thousand years. I have often wished to see these ‘Heroic Tales,’ in my retelling, issued properly, that is by themselves and *severed from their superfluous and worse than useless “setting” and misleading and absurd title*.¹⁴⁰

That it was her version of Deirdre’s tale to which she was most attached is also confirmed by Fiona’s suggestion, in the same letter, that the “Helen of Troy’ of Gaelic Legend” was especially deserving of independent publication if Mosher deemed the “Three-Sorrow’ version too long (“my retelling — I think the fullest, and most authentic — has been accepted by many good judges as the best [of the three]. It was certainly a labor [sic] of love, and *one of my few personal writings which I can reread without dissatisfaction*”).¹⁴¹

When Mosher’s stand-alone edition of *Deirdre and the Sons of Usna*, a limited print-run of 925 copies, appeared at last in 1903, it contained a nearly identical text of ‘Darthool’ from *The Laughter of Peterkin*, with only the heroine’s name exchanged¹⁴² and its title replaced. The frame-tale structure, however, was omitted entirely, and the prefatory presence of Ian Mor and ‘generic child’, Peterkin, exchanged for an essay dedicated to one particular child, ‘Esther Mona’, the real-life daughter of William Sharp’s friend (and ‘mother’ to Fiona Macleod), Edith Wingate Rinder (1864-1962).¹⁴³ Though much of Ian Mor’s scene-setting content is actually retained (e.g. Deirdre’s status as ‘lamp to a thousand poets’),¹⁴⁴ the essay itself is re-addressed to Esther, styled as a young girl firmly on the path to womanhood. Moreover, the earlier suggestion that certain older tales are not appropriate for all age-groups, but should be encountered gradually, is reinforced, but a note of distinctly feminine sweetness and romance is added. Esther, addressed as “little girl” and “little one”, is advised that:

When you grow to maidhood and womanhood, it is a hope of mine that you will love these old legendary tales... Before you read this time-sweet story of great love you will come to the story of Fionnula and her brothers, because the Tale of the Children of Lir, or the Tale of the Four Swans as it is

sometimes called, is first among the beautiful old stories *for the delight of those standing in or passing beyond childhood*.¹⁴⁵

Where Peterkin had been urged to dedicate himself (a boy-child) to an almost knightly devotion to 'Darthool' ("till you love [her] as did the sons of Usna, and would die for her, or live to see her starry eyes"),¹⁴⁶ Esther's contribution to preserving the tale, lest it ever be forgotten, is anticipated via her undoubted future role as a mother:

Shall the day come when the tale of Deirdre shall be no more told? If so, it is not merely beautiful children of Legend we shall lose, not [its] lovely raiment, but the very beauty and love themselves, the love of beauty [and] the love of love [...] So, little one, *come in time to love these things of beauty*. Lay your child's heart that is made of morning joy and evening longing to that mother-heart [of Beauty]: and when you gather years, [and] *when your time is come, and you in turn pass on the mystery of life to another who will look up from your breast with eyes of wonder and slowly shaping thought*, forget not to tell that other to lay its child's heart of morning joy and evening longing against a more ancient and dream-filled heart than that of any woman, that mother-heart of which I speak to you, the Heart of Beauty.¹⁴⁷

It is clear, however, that Esther's birth (in 1901), provided a merely convenient opportunity for emphasising a motif – the theme of motherhood, and its particular relation to Deirdre – which was already present within the *Peterkin* text of 'Darthool' in 1897, and is dwelled upon there at far greater length than by *Longes mac n-Uislenn* itself, or by any of Fiona's sources (like Carmichael, Hyde, or Cameron's text of Glenmasan in *Reliquiae Celticae*).¹⁴⁸ Despite the importance of Deirdre's pre-natal shriek from her mother's womb to the opening episode of *Longes mac n-Uislenn*, her birth itself is not described, nor her mother's own fate in its wake. The presence of her father, Conchobor's poet Feidlimid (Fiona's 'Felim'), is confined to the moment he insists that his wife explain the cause of the "violent noise" which has erupted from her body, disturbing their feast.¹⁴⁹ Neither parent is mentioned again. Deirdre's only guardians during her time in the *lios* are an unnamed couple who prepare her food and Leborcham, who cannot be excluded.¹⁵⁰ Fiona, however, even in *Peterkin*, dwells at length upon Deirdre's parentage, her removal from her birth-mother's care, and the substitutes who influence her girlhood. Her mother,¹⁵¹ Felim's wife, is given a name – Elva – and Fiona introduces her perspective several times into the narrative. The pain of Elva's potential loss, as well as Felim's, is referred to by Conchobor as a compelling reason to reject his court's demands for their child to be killed to appease the prophecy.¹⁵² Her relief at her daughter's reprieve is observed, and Fiona's Conchobor permits her to accompany the child to his court, and to remain a short while together:

The child was spared, and that night Elva slept in peace, and for many nights. When the days of feasting were over, Concobar [sic] left the home of Felim, and returned with all his company to Emania. With him he took the little child Deirdre, and Elva came with him for a month and a day. The month and the day soon passed, and then Elva went back to her own place. It was the will of the high king and of Felim, her husband; nevertheless, she sorrowed to part with her little child, who, even as a breast-babe, had eyes of so great a beauty that it was a joy to look into them.¹⁵³

An initially unnamed "nursing woman" takes Deirdre to the *lios* soon after. She is then, however, identified uniquely by Fiona as the sister of Leborcham, whose overwhelmingly sinister presence in *Longes mac n-Uislenn* is replaced by Fiona's assertion that she is the king's "own foster-child and under *geas* or bond to him [and] held by Concobar to be discreet and trustworthy beyond any other of his own people".¹⁵⁴ Deirdre's education is shaped solely by women (the sisters, one assumes, of Carmichael's "modest maidens", defined at much greater length). Fiona has obvious sympathy, too, for the seclusion of Deirdre's youth, and though this section of her tale betrays the influence of Hyde's *Three Sorrows* as well as *Deirdre*, the kind of company whose absence she most regrets is specified clearly (as, thus, is Fiona's particular concern). Hyde's version of Deirdre's speech, addressed to the character of the swineherd who has stumbled upon her enclosure, runs:

"[I miss] the sound of friendly voices, [and] converse sweet
With other lives and manners than [my] own".¹⁵⁵

Fiona's Deirdre regrets, instead:

“[having] converse with [my] *own kind*, and [being] kept away from *all the joys of youth*, and to pass from year to year and be exiled [here], *to bear no young voices, no young laughter*”.¹⁵⁶

Her development of these themes – maternity, parental attachment, the absence of youthful companions – may have been read as a suitable shift in focus for a tale designed, ostensibly, for children, were it not for the fact that Fiona's version, as we have seen, is otherwise remarkable for its failure to omit the vast majority of ‘adult’ themes excised by Hull, or occluded by Carmichael's *Deirdre* (even despite the latter's much less specific audience). Their presence would appear, instead, to have derived from personal significance. William Sharp's biographer, Flavia Alaya, suggests that the childlessness of his marriage to Elizabeth began to exercise visible influence upon Fiona's work in 1896 – the year before *Peterkin* was written – with the publication of her poem ‘The Unborn Child’.¹⁵⁷ An interest, however, in children and childhood more generally is apparent from the earliest collection of William's own poetry, *The Human Inheritance* (1882), which contains a sequence described by Alaya as “Peterkin without the visions”.¹⁵⁸ It would appear, in fact, as if the preference given to ‘Peterkin’ for “these three tales” in particular – the respective ‘Sorrows’ of Deirdre, the children of Lir, and the children of Turenn – belonged to William/Fiona first, due perhaps to the opportunities they provided for presenting a child's perspective upon their youthful surroundings, and contrasting this innocence with their transition from charmed youth to disenchanted, often tragic adolescence. That Fiona considered her Deirdre as the most successful of the three (as above), may suggest that she was especially pleased with these particular additions to her sources' original narrative, none of which are found at such length or with such significance in any other Revival-era version.¹⁵⁹

They are absent, too, from the final version of a contemporary Deirdre explicitly ‘retold to the children’, composed by Louise Charlotte Jack (1862-1948), despite her acknowledgement of debt to *The Laughter of Peterkin* directly (as well, once again, as to Carmichael's *Deirdre*).¹⁶⁰ Under the pseudonym ‘Louey Chisholm’, Jack, wife to an Edinburgh-based publisher, was the author of a series of books designed for “very little children”, whose standard practice was the “shortening and simplification” of stories selected from a wide range of older European literature.¹⁶¹ Her chapter, ‘Star-Eyed Deirdre’, in *Celtic Tales Told to the Children* (1910) is accompanied, like Fiona's, by versions of ‘The Children of Lir’, and ‘The Children of Turenn’, with illustrations throughout by ‘Glasgow-Girl’ Katherine Cameron (1874-1965).¹⁶² Though not without its moments of lurking peril – most of which, in fact, are expressed far more succinctly and effectively than Fiona's¹⁶³ – Chisholm maintains a far stricter focus upon the youth of her anticipated audience, and exercises greater caution in reshaping a number of episodes which *Peterkin* had embellished. The ‘sea of flowing crimson’ prophesied to engulf the kingdom if Deirdre should live is replaced with a gentler foreboding, combined with Fiona's longer description of her tremendous but ill-fated beauty:

‘This night, O Felim the Harper, shall a girl-babe be born to thee within these castle walls. Loveliest among the lovely shall thy star-eyed daughter be; no harp-strings shall yield such music as her voice, no fairy strains pour forth such wonder-stirring sound. Yet, O Felim, in days to come, because of this fair child shall great sorrow come upon our King Concobar and upon all his realm’.¹⁶⁴

There is no cross-country excursion, alfresco sleepover or breathless waking-up, or anything other than chaste affection exchanged between Deirdre and the brothers. Chisholm also removes Fiona's claim that, once the waters of the enchanted flood recede, Deirdre leaps from Naoise's shoulders and attempts to kill the warrior selected to wield his sword against the brothers (being thrown to the ground for her trouble).¹⁶⁵ Her death-scene dwells only briefly upon the basic action of the sword, not the bloody disorder of its impact, and the attention lavished by Deirdre upon Naoise's head, by Fiona, is replaced in Chisholm's conclusion by the restrained formality of a single kiss farewell:

With that [the brothers] laid their heads upon the block. A flash of the steel, and Alba was bereft of the fairest and noblest of her sons. And the air was rent with cries of lamentation. Then did a great champion [Cù Chulainn] stride across the plain, and to him did Deirdre tell of the fate of the sons of Usna. And under his care the star-eyed maiden came to where the heroes lay dead. And Deirdre kneeled, and she bent low over the head of Nathos, and kissed his dead lips. Then,

at the bidding of the champion, three graves were dug, and in them, standing upright, were buried Nathos and Ailne and Ardan, and upon the shoulders of each was his head placed. And as Deirdre gazed into the grave of Nathos, she moaned a lay which told of the brave deeds of the sons of Usna. It told, too, of her love for Nathos, and as she ended the mournful strain, her heartstrings broke, and she fell at the feet of her husband, and there did she die, and by his side was she buried.¹⁶⁶

Despite this restraint, however, Chisholm has also rejected the opportunity to address her readers – as Fiona does both ‘Peterkin’ and Esther – in a voice of grown-up experience. Her preface, in fact, excludes any such possibility firmly:

One of my friends tells me that you, little reader, will not like these old, old tales; another says they are too sad for you, and yet another asks *what these stories are meant to teach* [...]. It is true they are sad, but you do not always want to be amused. *And I have not told the stories for the sake of anything they may teach*, but because of their sheer beauty. I expect you to enjoy them as hundreds and hundreds of Irish and Scottish children have already enjoyed them – without knowing or wondering why.¹⁶⁷

It conveys, nonetheless, a briefly similar reminder to Fiona’s preface(s) of both the tale’s ultimate age and the presumed extent of its appeal in time and place (although, as discussed above, its assumption of long-ago childish listeners to tales about Deirdre, or any of Ulster’s heroes, is probably misplaced). ‘Star-Eyed Deirdre’ itself, akin to Chisholm’s aims for her *Told to the Children* series more generally, is the simplest and least conflicted in its content and presentation of any of the Revival-era Deirdres explored by this chapter. Moreover, though it is not the only retelling directed specifically towards children, it is the only one which refrains from employing an overtly narratorial voice (such as Hull’s meta-textual contention that Deirdre was reluctant to eat the slaughtered calf), and which does not seek to exhort, subtly or otherwise, moral discernment or modest behaviour amongst its readers. Both Hull’s depiction of Deirdre in *Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster*, and Gregory’s in *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, emphasise her ladylike demeanour and self-expressed ambition to be trained by other ‘modest maidens’ as the king’s ideal wife (retentions from Carmichael’s *Deirdire* which may, since neither Hull nor Gregory are otherwise faithful to it consistently, be assumed as deliberate).¹⁶⁸ Fiona Macleod’s near-identical renditions, in *The Laughter of Peterkin* and *Deirdre and the Sons of Usna*, project gendered models of readership upon the ‘ideal’ children to which each one’s preface is addressed, but her unusual emphasis upon maternity is present before the opportunity for re-dedication to Esther Mona – perhaps coincidentally a real child too – happens to arise. This second, rephrased introduction to the tale enables refinement of an existing theme and reinforcement of its private relevance for William Sharp and his alter-ego alike, reinforcing too Fiona’s unique consideration that Deirdre’s tale is not most suitable for ‘very little’ readers, but only for those who have ‘passed beyond’ the earliest years of childhood.¹⁶⁹ It also makes explicit a perceived connection between the rituals of motherhood – nursing one’s child at the breast, and telling it tales – advocated as an opportunity for Esther herself to preserve and pass on this particular tale of “lost world[s], and imperishable beauty”,¹⁷⁰ lest it be otherwise forgotten.¹⁷¹ Despite, however, this common emphasis upon preservation of something both ancient and supposedly endangered, neither example of Fiona’s didacticism – nor its fainter echo in Hull’s and Gregory’s renditions – is even half so strong as the tone adopted by Gaelic-language children’s literature like Grant’s *Dùsgadh na Féinne* and MacFarlane’s *Am Mosgladh Mòr*, urging their own readers to awaken from slumber and redress years of de-politicized apathy. The tales composed in English during the Celtic Revival, based loosely upon much older Gaelic literary tradition – but, as we have seen, dependent upon a narrow range of existing translation – devote themselves instead to promoting the idealized, romanticized heroism and poignantly beautiful tragedy of particular characters’ newly-reshaped lives. Though their specific audience is sometimes far less clear than for our Gaelic plays – as is the extent of their actual circulation amongst Scottish children – their authors share something of Grant’s and MacFarlane’s desire to promote dearly-held personal concerns, and those of the Revival more widely, amongst a new generation of younger readers.

Acknowledgements

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- ¹ Katherine Whyte Grant, *Dùsgadh na Féinne* (Paisley: J & R. Parlane, 1908). MacFarlane's play was serialised in a periodical, *The Celtic Monthly*, before a reduced version appeared as a stand-alone publication: Malcolm MacFarlane, 'Am Mosgladh Mòr', *The Celtic Monthly*, 22:7 (July 1914): 136–9; 22:8 (August 1914): 156–8; 22:9 (September 1914): 171–4; 23:3 (March 1915): 54–7, 23:4 (April 1915): 74–7, 23:5 (May 1915): 82–6, and Calum MacPharlain, *Am Mosgladh Mor* (Glasgo: An Comunn Gaidhealach, c. 1925). All of the English translations from Gaelic in this chapter are by Innes.
- ² T. M. Murchison, 'Lachlan Macbean', in D. Thomson (ed.), *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* (Oxford: Blackwell Reference, 1983), p. 160.
- ³ L. Macbean, 'The Mission of the Celt', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 21 (1896–97): 56–69 (pp. 57–66).
- ⁴ *Id.*, p. 69.
- ⁵ Antti Aarne & Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981, 2nd revision), p. 265.
- ⁶ Clare A. P. Willsdon, *Mural Painting in Britain 1840–1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Plate XXX.
- ⁷ Patrick Geddes, 'The Scots Renaissance', *Edinburgh Review*, 88 (1992):17–23 (pp. 22–3). My thanks to Dr Michael Shaw for alerting me to this example. See also Murdo MacDonald, 'Art, the Highlands and the Celtic Revival', in C. MacLachlan and R. W. Renton (eds), *Gael and Lowlander in Scottish Literature: Cross-Currents in Scottish Writing in the Nineteenth Century* (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2015), 203–215.
- ⁸ Geraint Evans, 'Modernist Arthur: The Welsh Revival', in Helen Fulton (ed.), *A Companion to Arthurian Literature* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp. 434–48.
- ⁹ Also referred to as 'King in the Mountain', or 'Sleeping Army'. For studies of this tale-type in Ireland see D. Ó hÓgáin, 'An É an tAm Fós É?', *Béaloides*, 42/44 (1974–1976): 213–308, and 'Has the Time Come?' (MLSIT 8009): 'The Barbarossa Legend in Ireland and Its Historical Background', *Béaloides*, 59 (1991): 197–207.
- ¹⁰ Seosamh MacCathmhaoil, 'The Sleepers of Aileach=Neid', *Ulad*, 1 (November 1904): 4–6. For the quotation from *The Irish News* see Marnie Hay, 'Explaining Uladh: cultural nationalism in Ulster', in B.T. FitzSimon & J. H. Murphy (eds), *The Irish Revival Reappraised* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp. 119–31 (p. 126). The slogan might be translated as 'Red Hand [to] the top' or 'Red Hand atop'.
- ¹¹ W.T. Kilgour, *Lochaber in War and Peace* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1908), pp. 125–6.
- ¹² J. Sobieski & C. E. Stuart, *Lays of the Deer Forest* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood & Sons, 1848), Vol. 2, pp. 525–7.
- ¹³ See, for instance, James MacDougall, *Folk and Hero Tales*, (London: D. Nutt, 1891), pp. ix, 73–5.
- ¹⁴ On the deaths see Geraldine Parsons, 'Breaking the Cycle? Accounts of the death of Finn' in Sharon Arbuthnot and Geraldine Parsons (eds), *The Gaelic Finn Tradition* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), pp. 81–96.
- ¹⁵ Lady Augusta Gregory, *Gods and Fighting Men* (London: John Murray, 1904), pp. 435–36 (this may not be considered as 'children's literature' *per se*, but W. B. Yeats's preface does imagine it as being read to children); Donald Alexander Mackenzie, *Finn and His Warrior Band* (London: Black & Son, 1911), pp. 245–8; Violet Russell, *Heroes of the Dawn* (London: Maunsel, 1914), pp. 248–51.
- ¹⁶ Sheila M. Kidd (ed.), *Còmbraidhean nan Cnoc: The Nineteenth-Century Gaelic Prose Dialogue* (Glasgow: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 2016), pp. 5–6.
- ¹⁷ Michelle Macleod, 'Language in Society: 1800 to the Modern Day' in Moray Watson and Michelle Macleod (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to the Gaelic Language* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 22–45.
- ¹⁸ [Christopher Anderson], *The first book which is used in the Gaelic circulating schools* (Edinburgh; A. Balfour, 1816). For a fuller treatment of these primers see Kidd, *Còmbraidhean nan Cnoc*, pp. 6–7.
- ¹⁹ *Id.*, pp. 6, 33.
- ²⁰ Sheila M. Kidd, 'Caraid nan Gaidheal and 'Friend of Emigration': Gaelic Emigration Literature of the 1840s', *The Scottish Historical Review* 81.1 (2002): 52–69 (pp. 61–2).
- ²¹ Donald E. Meek, 'Gaelic Printing and Publishing', in Bill Bell, Stephen W. Brown and Warren McDougall (eds), *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 3: Ambition and Industry 1800–1880* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 107–22 (p. 110).
- ²² Duncan Grant, *The Duty of Children to Love and Seek Christ* (Edinburgh: William Oliphant, 1822); Donncha Grannt, *Dleasdanas na Cloinne bhi 'g iarruidh agus a' gràdhachadh Chrìosd* (Dun-Éidin: Uilleam Oliphant, 1829).

- ²³ Fiona O' Hanlon and Lindsay Paterson, 'Gaelic Education since 1872', in Robert Anderson, Mark Freeman & Lindsay Paterson (eds), *The Edinburgh History of Education in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), pp. 304–25.
- ²⁴ Michael Newton, 'Tradition and Innovation in Twentieth-Century Scottish Gaelic Literature', in Sarah Dunnigan and Suzanne Gilbert (eds), *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Traditional Literatures* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), pp. 123–33 (p. 124).
- ²⁵ O' Hanlon and Paterson, 'Gaelic Education since 1872', pp. 304–25. On the situation and politicisation of Gaelic in education as reflected in the Gaelic *còmbraidhean* ('dialogues') published in a wide range of periodicals see Kidd, *Còmbraidhean nan Cnoc*, pp. 69–112.
- ²⁶ [No Author], 'Teachers of Gaelic: 1 – Miss Mary D. McQueen, Oban High School', *An Gàidheal* 23:3 (1927): 34–5 (p. 34).
- ²⁷ Calum MacPharlain, *An Treòraiche* (Struibhle [Stirling]: Aonghas MacAoidh, 1903); Calum MacPharlain, *An Comb-Threòraiche* (Stirling: Aonghas MacAoidh, 1911). For some comment on the Gaelic school readers see Donald John MacLeod, 'Gaelic Prose', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 49 (1974–76): 198–230 (p. 214).
- ²⁸ M. C. MacLeod (ed.), *Modern Gaelic Bards* (Stirling: Eneas MacKay, 1908), pp. 202–3.
- ²⁹ MacPharlain, *An Comb-Threòraiche*, p. 44. For more on MacFarlane see Roderick MacLeod, 'Malcolm MacFarlane (1853–1931) of Dalavich and Elderslie; Writer, Composer, Correspondent and Controversialist', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 64 (2004–2006): 299–315.
- ³⁰ On the history of plays in Gaelic see Michelle Macleod & Moray Watson, 'In the Shadow of the Bard: The Gaelic Short Story, Novel, and Drama since the Early Twentieth Century', in I. Brown et al. (eds), *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature Volume 3: Modern Transformations: New Identities (from 1918)* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp 273–82, and several articles in a special issue (Volume 9) of the *International Journal of Scottish Theatre and Screen*, <https://ijosts.ubiquitypress.com/34/volume/9/issue/0/>. For the nineteenth-century *còmbraidhean* ('dialogue') as precursor to playwriting in Gaelic see Kidd, *Còmbraidhean nan Cnoc*, p. 61.
- ³¹ Ealasaid Chaimbeul, *Air Mo Chuaire* (Steòrnabhagh: Acair, 1982), p. 23. For the children's play she describes see Dòmhnall Mac na Ceàrdaich, *D.M.N.C.: Sgrìobhaidhean Dhòmhnaill Mhic na Ceàrdaich* (Inbhir Nis: Clàr, 2014). I would like to thank Dr Aonghas MacCoinnich for alerting me to Chaimbeul's description.
- ³² Grant, *Dùsgadh na Féinne*, p. 15.
- ³³ Sim Innes, 'Dùsgadh na Féinne (1908): Katherine Whyte Grant's Scottish Gaelic kinderspiel', in Sharon Arbuthnot, Síle Ní Mhurchú, Geraldine Parsons (eds), *Proceedings of the 2nd International Finn Cycle Conference* (forthcoming 2018).
- ³⁴ Grant, *Dùsgadh na Féinne*, pp. 12–4.
- ³⁵ For further discussion of the political context of Grant's play see Innes, 'Dùsgadh na Féinne'.
- ³⁶ A. M. MacKay, 'Editor's Page: Gaelic Musical Play for Children', *The Celtic Monthly*, 22:7 (July 1914), p. 130.
- ³⁷ Discussed more fully by Innes, 'Dùsgadh na Féinne'.
- ³⁸ MacFarlane, 'Am Mosgladh Mòr', *The Celtic Monthly*, 23, p. 54.
- ³⁹ Priscilla Scott, 'With heart and voice ever devoted to the cause': women in the Gaelic Movement, 1886–1914' (PhD, University of Edinburgh, 2013: <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.is.ed.ac.uk/docview/1775215323?pq-origsite=primo>), pp. 92–4 on Harriet Stewart.
- ⁴⁰ David Clement, 'William Ferguson: Tales and Traditions from a Morvern Gaelic Speaker', *Tocher*, 9 (1973): 18–25 (p. 19). See also, [No Author], 'Teachers of Gaelic: VII – Miss Harriet Stewart', *An Gàidheal* 23:9 (1928): 130–1.
- ⁴¹ Scott, 'With heart and voice', pp. 37, 89. For Juliet and her family background see Somerled MacMillan, 'A Letter from D. C. MacPherson to Juliet MacDonald, 1879', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 11 (1968): 237–47.
- ⁴² MacFarlane, 'Am Mosgladh Mòr', *The Celtic Monthly*, 22:7, p. 136.
- ⁴³ Erich Poppe, *Of cycles and other critical matters: Some issues in Medieval Irish literary history and criticism*, E. C. Quiggin Memorial Lectures, 9 (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse, & Celtic, 2008).
- ⁴⁴ Kuno Meyer, 'Macgnímartha Finn', *Révue Celtique*, 5 (1882): 195–204, translated in Joseph Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw: The boyhood deeds of Finn in Gaelic narrative tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 209–21.
- ⁴⁵ Cécile O'Rahilly (ed.), *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1976), pp. 13–27, 136–48 (translation); translated more loosely in Jeffrey Gantz (ed.), *Early Irish myths and sagas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1981), pp. 134–46.
- ⁴⁶ O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, pp. 22, 145 (translation).

⁴⁷ The heightened tension they induce amongst their audience was described by James Carney as a 'stylistic highlight' of the *Táin*; 'The history of Early Irish literature: The state of research', in Gearóid Mac Eoin (ed.), *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Celtic Studies* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1983), pp. 113–30 (p. 114). For discussion of the significance of the 'boyhood deeds' anent Cù Chulainn's development as a warrior *par excellence* see Doris Edel, *Inside the Táin: Exploring Cú Chulainn, Fergus, Ailill, and Medb* (Berlin: Curach Bhán Publications, 2015), pp. 31–47.

⁴⁸ O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, pp. 26, 148 (translation).

⁴⁹ The Scottish manuscript context of self-contained episodes such as *Aided Con Culainn* ('Cù Chulainn's violent death') is discussed by Thomas Clancy, 'Die like a man? The Ulster Cycle death-tale anthology', *Aiste*, 2 (2008): 70–94; see also Donald Meek, 'The Scottish tradition of Fian ballads in the middle ages', in Cathal G. Ó hAinle & D. E. Meek (eds), *Unity in Diversity: Studies in Irish and Scottish Gaelic language, literature, and history* (Dublin: School of Irish, Trinity College Dublin, 2004), pp. 9–23.

⁵⁰ Pearse's friend, Desmond Ryan, wrote poignantly of Cù Chulainn as the "dark, sad boy" of whom Pearse spoke so often that he became "an important if invisible member of [St Enda's] staff"; Ryan, 'A Retrospect', in Desmond Ryan (ed.), *The Complete Works of P. H. Pearse: St Enda's and its founder* (Dublin: Phoenix Press Publishing Company Ltd., 1917), p. 90. In June 1909, a pageant based on Cù Chulainn's *macgnímrada* was performed in St Enda's grounds in front of 500 guests; see Brendan Walsh, *Boy Republic: Patrick Pearse and radical education* (Dublin: The History Press Ireland, 2013), p. 155, and Elaine Sisson, *Pearse's Patriots, St Enda's and the cult of boyhood* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004).

⁵¹ See Philip O'Leary, *The prose literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881–1921* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994).

⁵² Flavia Alaya, *William Sharp, 'Fiona Macleod', 1855–1905* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 126.

⁵³ Robert Crawford, *The Modern Poet: Poetry, academia and knowledge since the 1750s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 158; see also Murdo MacDonald, 'Celticism and Internationalism in the circle of Partick Geddes', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 6/2 (2005): 69–83, and 'Anima Celtica: Embodying the soul of the nation in 1890s Edinburgh', in Tricia Cusack & Síghle Bhreathnach-Lynch (eds), *Art, Nation and Gender: Ethnic Landscapes, Myths and Mother-Figures* (Ashgate, 2003), pp. XXX.

⁵⁴ Chiefly his 'Children of Lir', completed in 1913; National Library of Scotland Acc. 6866/5 [one of Duncan's work-in-progress notebooks, spanning December 1912 to September 1913], pp. 65–7.

⁵⁵ See Kate Louise Mathis, 'An Irish poster girl? Writing Deirdre during the Revival', in Willy Maley, Paddy Lyons, John Miller (eds), *Romantic Ireland from Tone to Gonne. Fresh perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 263–81 (pp. 267–70).

⁵⁶ Charles Squire, *The mythology of the British islands: An introduction to Celtic myth, legend, poetry and romance* (London: The Gresham Publishing Company, 1905), p. v.

⁵⁷ Eleanor Hull, *Cuchullin Saga* (London: Alfred Nutt, 1898), p. xiii.

⁵⁸ Eleanor Hull, *Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster* (London: George G. Harrap & Company, 1909).

⁵⁹ *Id.*, p. 12.

⁶⁰ Eleanor Hull, *The Boys' Cuchulain: Heroic legends of Ireland* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1910).

⁶¹ O'Rahilly, *Táin Bó Cúailnge: Recension I*, pp. 25, 147–8 (translation), and Gantz, *Early Irish Myths*, p. 146; Hull, *Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster*, p. 55.

⁶² W. B. Yeats, *Deirdre*, in *Collected Plays of W.B. Yeats* (London: Papermac, 1982), pp. 169–204; Virginia Bartholomé Rohan (ed.), *Deirdre: Manuscript Materials by W.B. Yeats* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁶³ Mathis, 'An Irish poster-girl'.

⁶⁴ Alexander Carmichael, 'Deirdire [part i: Gaelic]', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 13 (1888): 241–57; [part ii: English] 14 (1889): 370–89. It was printed in book form, with facing-page Gaelic and English text and illustrations by John Duncan, in 1905; Carmichael, *Deirdire and the Lay of the Children of Uisne* (Edinburgh: Norman MacLeod, 1905). For Duncan, see most recently Mark Williams, *Ireland's Immortals: A history of the gods of Irish myth* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 393–405.

⁶⁵ Fiona Macleod, 'The Gael and his heritage', in *The Winged Destiny: Studies in the spiritual history of the Gael* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1904), pp. 207–46 (p. 240).

⁶⁶ Vernam Hull (ed.), *Longes mac n-Uislenn: The Exile of the Sons of Uisliu* (New York, Modern Language Association of America, 1949), translated pp. 60–69; Gantz, *Early Irish Myths*, pp. 256–67.

- ⁶⁷ Cornelius Buttimer, 'Longes mac n-Uislenn reconsidered', *Éigse*, 28 (1994–5): 1–41 (p. 7); Joan Radner, "'Men Will Die": poets, harpers, and women in Early Irish Literature', in A. T. E. Matonis & D. Melia (eds), *Celtic Languages, Celtic Cultures* (Van Nuys, CA: Ford & Bailie, 1990), pp. 172–86 (p. 177).
- ⁶⁸ Hull, *Longes mac n-Uislenn*, p. 62. The ambiguity of *ben*, commonly 'wife' as well as 'woman' in Modern Irish, has led several scholars to assume, incorrectly, that it is conventional marriage to the girl which Conchobor has in mind; see most recently Síle Ní Mhurchú, 'Derdriu', in Siân Echard & Robert Rouse (eds), *The Encyclopedia of Medieval Literature in Britain* (John Wiley & Sons, 2017), and Kate Louise Mathis, 'Parallel "wives"; Deirdriu and Lúaine in Longes mac n-Uislenn and Tochmarc Lúaine agus Aided Athairne', in Gregory Toner & Séamus Mac Mathúna (eds), *Ulidia 3: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales* (Berlin: Curach Bhán Publications, 2013), pp. 17–25 (pp. 19–20).
- ⁶⁹ Sharon Arbuthnot, "'Da n-ó mele 7 cuitbuida and so": What did Derdriu say to Noísiu?', in Gregory Toner & Séamus Mac Mathúna (eds), *Ulidia 3: Proceedings of the Third International Conference on the Ulster Cycle of Tales* (Berlin: Curach Bhán Publications, 2013), pp. 221–30.
- ⁷⁰ National Library of Scotland Adv. Lib. 72.2.3 (the 'Glenmasan' manuscript), compiled c. 1490; see Caoimhín Breatnach, 'Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach', *Ériu*, 45 (1994): 99–112, and Rúairi Ó hUiginn, 'Growth and development in the late Ulster Cycle: The case of Táin Bó Flidais', in J. F. Nagy (ed.), *CSANA Yearbook 5: Memory and the modern in Celtic literatures* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006), pp. 143–63.
- ⁷¹ Whitley Stokes (ed.), 'The Wooing of Luaine and the Death of Athirne', *Révue Celtique*, 24 (1903): 270–88, discussed in Mathis, 'Parallel wives', pp. 18–9. The most readily-accessible version of this episode during the Revival was Eugene O'Curry's English-language translation, printed alongside his 'Three Sorrows of Storytelling' in 1862–3 (see note 76, below, and Mathis, 'An Irish poster-girl', pp. 265–7). Most apparent in the *Deirdres* of Lady Gregory and Yeats (*id.*, pp. 269–710, it was dwelled on also by Fiona Macleod, whose interest seems to have been stimulated by the opportunity to transfer Deirdre's propensity for unavoidable tragedy and ill-judgement onto her daughter; 'Honey of the Wild Bees', in Fiona Macleod, *The Dominion of Dreams* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1899), pp. 247–59).
- ⁷² Kate Louise Mathis, 'Mourning the maic Uislenn: Blood, death, and grief in Longes mac n-Uislenn and 'Oidheadh Chloinne hUisneach', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 29 (2013): 1–20 (pp. 10–15).
- ⁷³ In Gaelic-language lament and elegiac verse, other women's losses of their sweethearts are often compared to her own loss of Noísiu; see Kate Louise Mathis, "'Tha Mulad Air M'Inntinn" and early modern Gaelic dialogue poetry', *Aiste*, 5 (forthcoming, 2018).
- ⁷⁴ See Kathryn Stelmach, 'Dead Deirdre? Myth and Mortality in the Irish Literary Revival', in Joseph Falaky Nagy (ed.), *CSANA Yearbook 6: Myth in Celtic literatures* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 141–61.
- ⁷⁵ Fiona Macleod, *Deirdre and the Sons of Usna* (Portland, Maine: Thomas B. Mosher, 1903), p. 4. For a full list of the works she inspired, see T. Miyake (ed.), *Deirdre: From the Earliest Manuscripts to Yeats and Synge* (Okayama-Ken: University Education Press, 1999).
- ⁷⁶ Eugene O'Curry, 'The "Trí Thruaige na Scélaigheachta" of Erinn I: The exile of the Children of Uisneach', *The Atlantis, or register of literature and science of the Catholic University of Ireland*, 3 (1862): 377–422; 'The "Trí Thruaige na Scélaigheachta" of Erinn II: The fate of the Children of Lir', and 'III: The fate of the Children of Tuireann', 4 (1863): 113–57, 157–240. It was recommended, for example, by 'Fiona Macleod' to Yeats, who brought it to the attention of Lady Gregory; see John Kelly & R. Schuchard (eds), *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, 1901–1904* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 136–41. Gerard Murphy suggested that the 'Three Sorrows', which have little in common besides numerous examples of violent death, became associated only in the scribal tradition of the eighteenth century, but are combined with increasing regularity in the nineteenth; Murphy, *Fianatocht agus rómánaíocht: The Ossianic lore and romantic tales of medieval Ireland*, *Irish Life and Culture* 11 (Dublin: O Lochlainn, 1955), pp. 32–3.
- ⁷⁷ Murray Pittock, *Spectrum of decadence: The literature of the 1890s* (London: Routledge, 2nd edition 2014), p. 101.
- ⁷⁸ Lady Augusta Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne: The story of the men of the Red Branch of Ulster* (London: John Murray, 1902).
- ⁷⁹ W. B. Yeats, preface to Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, p. xvii. His preface to her later volume, *Gods and Fighting Men: The story of the Tuatha De Danaan and of the Fianna of Ireland* (London: John Murray, 1904), p. xiv, observed more clearly still that "I have wished to become a child again that I might find this book, that not only tells one of such a

country, but is fuller than any other book that tells of heroic life, [and] of the childhood that is in all folk-lore; [it is] dearer to me than all the [grown-ups'] books of the western world”

⁸⁰ Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, pp. v–vi.

⁸¹ *Id.*, p. 111.

⁸² Hull, *Longes mac n-Uislenn*, p. 62.

⁸³ Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, pp. 106–7.

⁸⁴ *Id.*, p. 123.

⁸⁵ *Id.*, p. 135.

⁸⁶ *Id.*, p. 133.

⁸⁷ *Id.*, p. 137. See also James Stephens, *Deirdre* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1923), p. 286.

⁸⁸ Hull, *Longes mac n-Uislenn*, p. 69; Gantz, *Early Irish myths*, p. 267.

⁸⁹ Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, p. 140.

⁹⁰ Whitley Stokes' English translation of part of the text from the Glenmasan manuscript, published in 1887; Stokes, 'The Death of the Sons of Uisneach', *Irische Texte*, 2/2 (1887): 109–84. Lady Gregory was probably unaware that he had chosen to replace the brothers' death-scene, absent from Glenmasan itself due to a missing leaf, with a nineteenth-century version copied from another of the National Library's holdings (Adv. Lib. 72.2.6); see Mathis, 'Mourning the maic Uislenn', p. 7.

⁹¹ James Pethica (ed.), *Lady Gregory's Diaries: 1892–1902* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1996), pp. 293, 305.

⁹² Carmichael, 'Deirdire [part ii]', p. 376; Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, p. 111.

⁹³ *Id.*, p. 133.

⁹⁴ John Macneill's version was subject to considerable revision by Carmichael prior to publication, including the almost-verbatim insertion of several episodes from the Glenmasan manuscript; see Tristan ap Rheinallt, 'Alexander Carmichael, Alan Bruford and *Deirdire*', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 28 (2011): 227–32.

⁹⁵ Carmichael, 'Deirdire [part ii]', p. 385.

⁹⁶ Alan Bruford, "'Deirdire' and Alexander Carmichael's treatment of oral sources', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 14 (1983): 1–24 (p. 16).

⁹⁷ Hull, *Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster*, p. 277.

⁹⁸ *Id.*, pp. 238–9 (emphasis added).

⁹⁹ *Id.*, p. 277.

¹⁰⁰ *Id.*, p. 278.

¹⁰¹ Identified by Douglas Hyde, who made a partial transcription and translation of his text in the 1890s, as the work of Samuel Bryson, or Mac Brisi, apparently an associate of Wolf Tone and the United Irishmen in 1798; Hyde, 'Déirdre', *Zeitschrift für Celtisches Philologie*, 2 (1899): 138–55. At 81 pages in manuscript, it is also by far the longest of the Early Modern versions, adjudged by Hyde as largely unique in its presentation of Deirdre's girlhood.

¹⁰² *Id.*, p. 147. Bryson even adds an explanatory gloss to his chosen term for their conjugal couch ("cearcaille a bed; aird cearcaille foibhein his own Royal bed").

¹⁰³ Hull, *Longes mac n-Uislenn*, ll. 90–9 (translation by Mathis).

¹⁰⁴ Hull, *Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster*, pp. 199–200 (emphasis added). The motif of the ball-game itself is Hull's only direct borrowing from Bryson (*loc. cit.*, p. 153), but its placement within her tale is otherwise dissimilar.

¹⁰⁵ Hull, *Longes mac n-Uislenn*, pp. 61–2.

¹⁰⁶ Hull, *Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁷ *Id.*, p. 199.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Letter from William Sharp to John Macleay (an acquaintance of Patrick Geddes and fellow contributor to *The Evergreen*), dated September 29, 1897; The William Sharp Archive, ed. W. F. Halloran, <https://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/Research%20Projects/Fiona%20McLeod%20Archive/1897.pdf>, section XVI, pp. 61–2 [accessed May 7, 2018] (emphasis added). Sharp, already an author in his own right, published a variety of books and collections of poetry under the pseudonym, 'Fiona Macleod', which he adopted in the strictest secrecy in 1894. Fiona's creation was inspired by his friendship with Edith Wingate Rinder (1864–1962), the niece-by-marriage of Sharp's wife's closest childhood friend, women's rights' activist Mona Caird (1854–1932); Elizabeth Sharp herself acknowledged that William "found the desired incentive towards a true[r] expression of himself, in the stimulus and sympathetic understanding of the friend to whom he dedicated the first of the books

[Pharais] published under his pseudonym”; Elizabeth A. Sharp, *William Sharp (Fiona Macleod): A memoir* (London: Heinemann, 1910), p. 222; see Williams, *Ireland's Immortals*, pp. 370–89, and Michael Shaw, ‘William Sharp’s Neopaganism: Queer identity and the national family’, in D. Dau & S. Preston (eds), *Queer Victorian families: Curious relations in literature* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), pp. 77–96.

¹¹⁰ Sharp, *Memoir*, p. 285.

¹¹¹ Based loosely on *Oidheadh Chloinne Lir* (‘The violent death of the Children of Lir’); see Caoimhín Breatnach, ‘The religious significance of Oidheadh Chloinne Lir’, *Ériu*, 50 (1999): 1–40.

¹¹² *Oidheadh Chloinne Tuirenn* (‘The violent death of Tuirenn’s sons’); see Caoimhín Breatnach, ‘Oidheadh Chloinne Tuireann agus Cath Maige Tuired: dhá shampla de mhíotas eiseamláireach’, *Éigse*, 32 (2000): 35–46.

¹¹³ Fiona Macleod, *The Laughter of Peterkin* (London: Constable & Co., 1897), p. 27.

¹¹⁴ *Id.*, p. 26. Flavia Alaya identifies him, nonetheless, as “without doubt Sharp himself, liberated from perspective and restraint by the camouflage of [Fiona’s] pseudonymous authorship”; Alaya, *William Sharp*, p. 23. Sharp’s own, starkly factual memoir of his youth was published firmly as ‘William’, and Alaya draws a clear distinction between it and the “veiled and fictionalized autobiography” of *Peterkin’s* prologue; *id.*, pp. 22–3), and William Sharp, ‘In the days of my youth’, *Mainly about people* (November 14, 1900): 484–5.

¹¹⁵ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 27 (emphasis added).

¹¹⁶ A recurring character in Fiona’s work, based upon the fisherman, Seumas Macleod, whose surname was borrowed by Sharp for his alter ego; Fiona Macleod, ‘Seumas: A memoir’, in *The Winged Destiny*, pp. 247–50 (p. 247). A letter composed to Edith Rinder’s husband, Frank, referred to Seumas as the “father of Fiona”; Sharp, *Memoir*, p. 316.

¹¹⁷ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 30.

¹¹⁸ *Id.*, pp. 177–8.

¹¹⁹ For the Ossianic controversy, see most recently Dafydd Moore (ed.), *The International Companion to James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Glasgow: Scottish Literature International, 2017); for the genuine Gaelic tradition underlying Macpherson’s Deirdre, see Derick S. Thomson, *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's Ossian* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1952), pp. 52–4. William Sharp had re-edited the collected *Poems of Ossian* in 1896, providing in preface a well-reasoned, scholarly summation of earlier arguments for and against the poems’ authenticity, startling in contrast to the detail and general tone of his alter-ego’s ‘Darthool’, as well as much of Fiona’s typical output; James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Patrick Geddes & Co., 1896), pp. ix–xxiv. Elizabeth Sharp’s revised edition of *The Laughter of Peterkin* in the *Collected Works of Fiona Macleod* (1927) makes the connection to Macpherson explicit, but Fiona’s original explains ‘Darthool’ simply as the correct Scottish, not Irish, version of the name: “here in our own land she is called Dartool [and] that I will call her”; Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 179.

¹²⁰ *Id.*, pp. 178–9. Like Seamas Macleod, the original of *Peterkin’s* ‘Tan Mor’, ‘Barabal’ (sometimes Barbara) Mac-Aodh was also inspired by William’s own childhood nurse; Sharp, *Memoir*, p. 5.

¹²¹ Another clear intrusion into Fiona’s work of William Sharp’s more scholarly activity: his preface to *Lyra Celtica: An Anthology of representative Celtic poetry* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd Ltd., 1896), edited by his wife Elizabeth, recommended Hyde’s poem as the very best version of Deirdre’s story, “re-told by one who is both a poet and a scholar”.

¹²² Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, p. xxii.

¹²³ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 187.

¹²⁴ *Id.*, p. 191.

¹²⁵ *Id.*, p. 198 (emphasis added).

¹²⁶ *Id.*, p. 214.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Id.*, pp. 216–7.

¹²⁹ *Id.*, p. 223.

¹³⁰ *Id.*, p. 224.

¹³¹ Hyde, *Three Sorrows of Storytelling*, p. 3.

¹³² Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, pp. 185–6 (emphasis added).

¹³³ *Id.*, pp. 248–9, 258–9; Hyde, *Three Sorrows of Storytelling*, pp. 19–20, 25. For a translation of the Glenmasan visions see Donald Mackinnon, ‘The Glenmasan Manuscript’, *The Celtic Review*, 1, no. 2 (October, 1904): 104–31 (pp. 107, 117–9).

¹³⁴ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 259.

¹³⁵ *Id.*, p. 275.

¹³⁶ Hull, *Cuchulain, the Hound of Ulster*, p. 240.

¹³⁷ Gregory, *Cuchulain of Muirthemne*, p. 137.

¹³⁸ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, pp. 276–7.

¹³⁹ Fiona Macleod to Benjamin Burgess Moore; The William Sharp Archive, ed. W. F. Halloran, <https://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/Research%20Projects/Fiona%20McLeod%20Archive/1898.pdf>, Section XVII, p. 26 [accessed May 7, 2018] (emphasis added).

¹⁴⁰ Fiona Macleod to Thomas B. Mosher (July 9, 1901); *id.*, Section XXI, p. 29 [accessed May 8, 2018] (emphasis added).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* A pitch sent by William Sharp to publisher John Lane in 1894 (just prior to Fiona's official birth, with the publication of *Pharais* the same year) confirms it as a long-held ambition, not yet financially viable: "It has been a dream with me for many years to write this book, but now I do not see my way to its accomplishment, unless I can obtain a commission that would justify me in devoting myself to it"; *id.*, Section XI, pp. 21–2 [accessed May 7, 2018].

¹⁴² The exchange of 'Darthool' for 'Deirdré' was stipulated by another of Fiona's letters to Mosher, dated May 14, 1903; *id.*, Section XXIII, p. 21 [accessed May 8, 2018]. 'Nathos', too, is altered to 'Naois' throughout.

¹⁴³ Esther Mona Harvey, née Rinder (1901–1993), is also one of the dedicatees of The William Sharp Archive (<https://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/research/william-sharp-fiona-macleod-archive/acknowledgements> [accessed May 5, 2018]); its editor, William F. Halloran, implies that she was William Sharp's own daughter, not Edith Rinder's husband Frank's (*id.*, Section XXIV p. 6). Flavia Alaya identified 'Esther Mona' mistakenly as the daughter of Edith's aunt-by-marriage, Mona Caird, for whom she was probably named; Alaya, *William Sharp*, p. 123. Another of Fiona's letters to Mosher, dated June 3, 1903, requests the hasty dispatch of two advance copies of the new book, intended as a gift to Esther for her second birthday the following month; The William Sharp Archive, (<https://www.ies.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/Research%20Projects/Fiona%20McLeod%20Archive/1901.pdf>), Section XXI, p. 21 (accessed May 7, 2018).

¹⁴⁴ E.g. Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 177; Fiona Macleod, *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna* (Portland, Maine: Thomas B. Mosher, 1903), p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Macleod, *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, p. v (emphasis added).

¹⁴⁶ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 179.

¹⁴⁷ Macleod, *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, pp. xi–xii (emphasis added). A third version of this preface, retaining the 'call to motherhood' though without its specific dedication to Esther, was printed as 'The Ancient Beauty' in Fiona's *The Winged Destiny* (1904); Macleod, *op. cit.*, pp. 329–38.

¹⁴⁸ It may also have been influenced by her evident fondness for a poem, 'Ora nam Buadh' ('The invocation of the Graces'), also collected by Alexander Carmichael and published in the first volume of his magnum opus, *Carmina Gadelica* (1900). This poem, suggested by Carmichael as an invocation for "a maiden on [the occasion of] her marriage" – when imminent motherhood was also anticipated – places Deirdre in the exalted company of several other Gaelic heroines whom young women should hope to emulate; Carmichael, *Carmina Gadelica: Hymns and Incantations, volume I* (Edinburgh, T. & A. Constable, 1900), p. 7, and Macleod, 'The Gael and his heritage', *loc. cit.*, pp. 239–40.

¹⁴⁹ Hull, *Longes mac n-Uislenn*, ll. 14–5, p. 60 (translation).

¹⁵⁰ *Id.*, ll. 86–9, p. 62 (translation).

¹⁵¹ It is interesting to note that John Todhunter, the other contemporary writer whose work referred to Deirdre's mother, was a friend of William's, and more interesting still that his poem, 'The Fate of the Sons of Usna', observes only that the nameless woman died in childbirth; Sharp, *Memoir*, p. 141; John Todhunter, 'The Fate of the Sons of Usna', in *Three Irish Bardic Tales, being metrical versions of the three tales known as the Three Sorrows of Storytelling* (London, J. M. Dent & Co., 1896), p. 52.

¹⁵² Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 189; *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, p. 14.

¹⁵³ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 192; *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁴ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, pp. 193–4; *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, p. 18. The maliciousness of her response to Deirdre's vision of the blood-soaked calf is also tempered: Fiona has it, instead, that her introduction of Naois to

the narrative is moved solely by “the power of Destiny”, to which she swiftly regrets giving voice once the extent of the girl’s enchantment by his description becomes clear.

¹⁵⁵ Hyde, *Three Sorrows of Storytelling*, p. 9.

¹⁵⁶ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, pp. 206–7; *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, p. 30 (emphasis added).

¹⁵⁷ Macleod, *From the Hills of Dream* (Edinburgh: Patrick Geddes & Co., 1896), p. 100; Alaya, *William Sharp*, p. 124.

¹⁵⁸ The series, titled ‘Childhood’s inheritance’, depicts a young boy “growing almost wildly on the [Scottish] moors, in union and communion with his natural surroundings”; Alaya, *William Sharp*, p. 33 (and note 114, above).

¹⁵⁹ Hull’s assertion that Deirdre and Naesi were childhood friends is closest, but derives from an older source (as note 101, above).

¹⁶⁰ Louey Chisholm [Louise Charlotte Jack], *Celtic Tales Told to the Children* (London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1910), p. vi. Her obituary was published in *The Scotsman* on October 29, 1948 (I am indebted for this reference to Dr Priscilla Scott).

¹⁶¹ As reviewed by “Mr Clement K. Shorter in *The Sphere*”, in a publisher’s advertisement for earlier volumes in the series attached to the inside cover of *Celtic Tales Told to the Children*.

¹⁶² Jude Burkhauser (ed.), *Glasgow Girls: Women in Art and Design 1880–1920* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1990), pp. 220–1.

¹⁶³ For example, the episode in which Deirdre and Nathos first meet, and are fearful of being spied upon; Chisholm, *Celtic Tales*, p. 15; Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 220, and *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, pp. 41–2.

¹⁶⁴ Chisholm, *Celtic Tales*, p. 2. Chisholm’s ‘star-eyed’ Deirdre is borrowed from Hyde’s description in his *Three Sorrows* (p. 3), whose influence is also acknowledged (*id.*, p. vi).

¹⁶⁵ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, p. 275; *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, p. 90.

¹⁶⁶ Chisholm, *Celtic Tales*, pp. 40–1.

¹⁶⁷ *Id.*, p. vii (emphasis added).

¹⁶⁸ Yeats, in correspondence with Lady Gregory, described Deirdre as a “normal, compassionate, wise house-wife”, whose feeling for Noísiu is “the feeling of the house-wife for the man of the house”; see Mathis, ‘An Irish poster girl’, p. 270.

¹⁶⁹ *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, p. v. Chisholm, who may be thought to have ignored this advice, may in fact have been unaware of the stand-alone publication of *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, and of its reshaped presentation, since her acknowledgments (p. vi) refer to *The Laughter of Peterkin* alone.

¹⁷⁰ Macleod, *Laughter of Peterkin*, pp. 178–9; *Deirdré and the Sons of Usna*, p. 4.

¹⁷¹ *Id.*, pp. xi–xii.