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Fiona Macleod

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and Helena, where they are lost in each other's love; just at this moment Phorkyas rushes in, and again Faust is angry at the interruption:

Verwegne Störung! widerwärtig dringt sie ein. (9435 ff.)

(19) Gretchen feels the evil presence of Mephistopheles, as is shown by the scene in the garden (3427 ff.); Helena shares that feeling with respect to Phorkyas:

Ein Widerdämon bist du, das empfind ich wohl,  
Und fürchte, Gutes wendest du zum Bösen um (9072 f.).

This rather mechanical enumeration of the steps in which the Faust-Helena action resembles the Faust-Gretchen action may have the advantage of bringing out more clearly than is usually realized the extent to which the two are similar. Quite apart from these two episodes, the recurrence of so many ideas and situations of Part I in Part II, as presented above, seems to show pretty clearly that Goethe, while under the strain of finishing Part II, frequently helped himself in matters of detail by once more using material that had been previously employed in Part I.

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### FIONA MACLEOD

Has the Celtic folk-lore and legendary lore in general, of the so-called Fiona Macleod, ever been checked up? This should be done, if it is to serve for students, and the entire mass and every part of it be confirmed or discarded, by those competent; for a very little reading in the lore of northwestern Spain has thrown the gravest doubt in my mind on the accounts of that prose poetess whose very existence is a mystification. In the folk-lore of Galicia and the Asturias you meet the Sin-Eater, the Washer of the Ford, the dark star, and some minor correspondences that I propose to indicate briefly here.

The convincing *Life* of William Sharp written by his gallant

wife<sup>1</sup> shows to the careful reader that the Fiona Macleod episode was not unique in his life; that it was possibly the outcome of the same sort of emotional and poetic explosion, so to speak, as had already produced *Sospiri di Roma*; that it was fostered by living in a lush miasmatic dell, and with lapse of time and change of residence became difficult to maintain. The successive books of Fiona Macleod show a dwindling of the initial impetus and increasing dependence on the literary material available to a hard-worked producer.

William Sharp had of the Celtic genius those traits more often associated with Ireland than Scotland: an explosive and irresponsible temper, more apt to project than to complete; a love of mystification; an easy-going conscience in matters intellectual. *Green Fire*, it seems, was never republished because the Breton lore and the Breton description were done too much out of his head.<sup>2</sup> The phenomenon of an imaginary reminiscence which doubtless figures in his later writings both as William Sharp and as Fiona Macleod, also in personal correspondence—*i. e.*, what he thought he remembered hearing from old Gaelic servants and fishermen—is too common to count as abnormal or insincere. What good autobiography is certainly free of it? He had long before put on the petticoats in literature, as when with Blanche Willis Howard he collaborated in a novel and wrote the wife's part. He had used or intended more than half a dozen pseudonyms already, and published fragments from the "Lost Journals" of Piero di Cosimo that deceived critics.<sup>3</sup> With their dear friend Mrs. Mona Caird and a good many of their London circle, the Sharps heard plenty of the sentimental, elemental, anthropological, and supernatural manifestation of womanhood which was the last incarnation of the Victorian ideal, and constituted the rest of Fiona Macleod's stock in trade. The violent action of the tales William Sharp had learned by writing stories for boys. In the psychology which the *Life* reveals, there is plenty which can be called irregular, but nothing which could be called abnormal. The parallel case is not Sally Beauchamp, but Thomas Chatterton.

The Sin-Eater is a Gallegan figure—*i. e.*, a man who eating

<sup>1</sup> *William Sharp (Fiona Macleod). A Memoir compiled by his Wife, Elizabeth A. Sharp, Duffield & Co., New York, 1910.*

<sup>2</sup> *Life*, p. 276.

<sup>3</sup> *Life*, p. 247.

above a corpse assumes thereby the sins of the dead man—and is named by the novelist Emilia Pardo Bazán.<sup>4</sup> William Sharp knew her work, for he quotes a phrase of hers in 1894, writing to Mr. Alden of *Harper's*.<sup>5</sup>

The Washers of the Fords are *Xanas*, white women who live enchanted in fountains and on St. John's Eve, before dawn, wash their clothes and spread them in the dew. D. Ramón Menéndez Pidal in his collection of Asturian romances,<sup>6</sup> and Señor Murguía in his *Galicia*<sup>7</sup> volume, offer sources easily accessible; or the author might have met the white ladies as the Night-Washers in Brittany. His introduction of the subject is wary, if not ambiguous: "I doubt if any now living, either in the Hebrides or in Ireland, has heard even a fragmentary legend of the Washer of the Ford. The name survives, with its atmosphere of a remote past, its dim ancestral memory of a shadowy figure of awe haunting a shadowy stream in a shadowy land."<sup>8</sup> In the *Biblioteca de las Tradiciones Españolas*, the eighth volume is given over to two long articles, an Essay on the Rose by Cecilia Schmidt Branco, and *Folk-Lore de Proaza* by Señor Giner Arivau.<sup>9</sup> On p. 229 appears a stream with washers who waylay the traveller and ask for his kerchief, which suits well with Fiona Macleod's account. In this same article of Giner, as in some of the *Romances* of Menéndez Pidal, the Magdalen figures in something the same romantic aspect, barring the erotic note: and the fleeting souls that are lost if they are not

<sup>4</sup>The reference to title and page is unluckily mislaid, but the fact stands in my transcript of notes made immediately on finishing the reading last spring: and I had rather let the point go by default than search through the nine volumes of the Spanish Folk-Lore Society, and the twenty-seven of the Countess's collected works. Cf. *The Sin-Eater and Other Tales*, Patrick Geddes and Colleagues, Edinburgh, 1895.

<sup>5</sup>*Life*, p. 217.

<sup>6</sup>*Colección de los Viejos Romances que se cantan por los Asturianos* por Juan Menéndez Pidal. Madrid, 1885.

<sup>7</sup>*España, sus Monumentos y Artes: Galicia*, por Manuel Murguía, Barcelona, 1888.

<sup>8</sup>*The Washer of the Ford*, Patrick Geddes and Colleagues, Edinburgh 1896, pp. 9-10. The reference to Sir Samuel Ferguson which follows, does indeed supply the phrase, but the Banshee in *Congal* is a very different figure. *Congal*, Sir S. Ferguson, London, 1872, p. 57.

<sup>9</sup>*Biblioteca de las Tradiciones Populares Españolas*, tomo VIII. Madrid, 1886, pp. 101-310.

shriven, are precisely *almas en pena*, or the souls who go on pilgrimage in swarms across the sky.<sup>10</sup> The substitution of shrouds for handkerchief is of course sheer "literature."

A sub-title, in one of the later volumes, *Under the Dark Star*, and *children of the dark star* are striking phrases. It happens that the same epithet was applied by medieval travellers to the granite land that lies at the end of the world. The Latin secretary of the Knight of Rozmital writes that Finisterre was called *Stella obscura*, and Gabriel Tetzal his companion, is equally explicit.<sup>11</sup> Sr. Murguia<sup>12</sup> accepts the phrase as current, and explains it partly by reference to the land of the dead.

Whether Sharp was acquainted with the work of Murguia and Menéndez Pidal, I have no way to know, but I do hold proof that he had access to Sr. Giner's article, for he drew from the essay on the rose<sup>13</sup> in the same volume, for one or more papers sown with allusions to Mr. Yeats. These were published in *Country Life*. republished as *Rosa Mystica* in *Where the Forest Murmurs*.<sup>14</sup> The evidence is of a kind familiar to scholars, the same that serves to show how the author of the *Cursor Mundi* used Petrus Comestor.

<sup>10</sup> *Washer*, p. 43.

"It is Mary Magdalen my name is and I love Christ.  
And Christ is the Son of God and Mary the Mother of Heaven.  
And this river is the river of death, and the shadows  
Are the fleeting souls that are lost if they be not shriven."

V. Giner, pp. 137-140 for the Magdalen, "que tanto amó en el mundo"; 228-31 for the *Xanas*; 234-7 for the *almas en pena*; 267-8 for souls wandering. V. Menéndez Pidal, Romance LXIV, p. 219, for the Magdalen; LXVI, p. 222, for the *Alma en Pena*. Cf. the popular saying about S. Andrés de Teijido, that those must make the pilgrimage after death, who have not made it in life, quoted in the *Cancionero Popular Gallego* of José Perez Ballesteres, *Biblioteca*, VII, 195, note.

<sup>11</sup> *Des böhmischen Herrn Leo's von Rozmital Ritter- Hof- und Pilger-Reise durch die Abendlande, 1465-1467*. Stuttgart, 1844, pp. 91 and 177. Tetzal's words are: "Von Sant Jacob ritt wir auss gem Finstern Stern als es dann die bauren nennen, es heisst aber Finis terrae."

<sup>12</sup> *Galicia*, p. 133 and again 197.

<sup>13</sup> A *Rosa na Vida dos Povos* por Cecilia Schmidt Branco, in *Biblioteca de Tradiciones*, tomo VIII, pp. 1-168. Cited as C. S. B.

<sup>14</sup> *Where the Forest Murmurs, Nature Essays*, by Fiona Macleod. London, 1906, cited as F. M.

Reference to a pair of pages as the book opens must suffice here for the reader to make comparisons. With F. M., p. 344, for Bion and the dance of Eros, compare C. S. B., p. 6; for Christ's blood, the crown of thorns, and the ladder, F. M., p. 345, compare C. S. B., pp. 7, 9, and again 9. With the chapter in C. S. B. on "the rose in medicine and magic," compare a letter in the *Life*, p. 405. The method of Gaelicizing is simple and easily illustrated; Senhora Branco writes, translating from Brand, that the white rose is always planted on a maid's grave, the red rose reserved for someone distinguished for goodness and especially benevolence (p. 32). F. M. makes the girl Irish and the other a drowned fisherman and buries both flowers. "I know of a dead Irish girl into [*sic*] whose right hand was placed a white rose, and of a drowned fisherman in whose hand was placed a red rose, symbols of spiritual rebirth and of deathless youth" (p. 345). This is quite like substituting a shroud for a pocket-handkerchief in the interest of romance, and there is an odder bit of transmutation earlier, on p. 339: "In the long history of the rose, from the time when the Babylonians carried sceptres ornamented now with this flower, now with the apple or lotus." Now, earlier in C. S. B. at the foot of a page,<sup>15</sup> the word *sceptre* catches the eye, and it takes a moment of careful reading to make out that the golden sceptre and the wild rose are simply figures on a shield, substituted one for the other. I am therefore convinced that the Babylonian and lotus elements came out of the Magic that Sharp and Mr. Yeats were dabbling in, that the apple was a Celtic tag, and that the solemn Asian allusion is sheer *pastiche*.

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<sup>15</sup> A count of Berge in 1090, believing his wife unfaithful, killed her and exposed her children, who grew up in a rose-thicket. The Count while hunting found them, and recognizing the injustice, took them back, and in sign of penitence "substituiu o sceptro d'ouiro do seu brazão por uma rosa silvestre," p. 16, last two lines.