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Introduction

Fiona Macleod created many works in the little magazine *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal*, primarily Celtic tales. Macleod was a creation of William Sharp, who was an avid writer himself. The creation of Macleod and her three Celtic stories “The Anointed Man” vol. 1, “The Snow-Sleep of Angus Ogue” vol. 4 and the “Kingdom of the Earth” vol. 3. are representative of the points of view Victorian society had on women during the fin de siècle of the 19th century that would have also been valued in *The Evergreen*, which can be seen through Patrick Geddes contribution (author of *The Evergreen*) in the “Moral Evolution of Sex”.

William Sharp (AKA Fiona Macleod)

William Sharp who worked alongside Patrick Geddes as editor and author in creating *The Evergreen* played an integral role in evoking the message the magazine was aiming to portray: celebrating Celts in a non-idealistic way, forward and humanistic thinking. Sharp brought along his experience of working on his own magazine *The Pagan Review* which dealt with Pagan and Celtic history making him an ideal candidate in participating in the theme of Celtic revival in *The Evergreen* (Kooistra, “General Introduction”). He himself contributed to the first three volumes of *The Evergreen*: “The Norland Wind” vol.1, “The Hill Water”, vol.2 and “Oceanus” vol. 3.

Additionally, William Sharp contributed to *The Evergreen* through his female pseudonym, Fiona Macleod. Sharp had created other pseudonyms in his lifetime such as W.H. Brooks when working on *The Pagan Review*, however, Macleod, through *The Evergreen* and other works, drew much more attention and success (Denisoff). Macleod at the time was believed to be a separate individual until Sharp's death in 1905 which is when she was finally revealed to be his

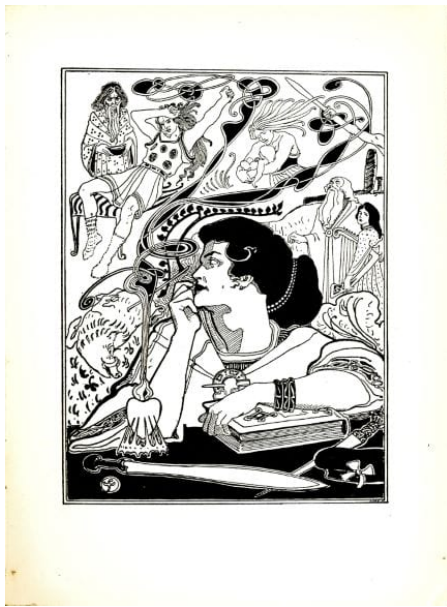


WILLIAM SHARP
After a pastel drawing by Charles Ross, 1891

Charles Ross. William Sharp
Portrait. 1891. The Yellow
Nineties Online. Public Domain.

creation. Sharp was known by his wife to be struggling with his identity, he often felt that he had another personality of a woman, Macleod was a manifestation of that personality. (Ferguson 117)

Fiona Macleod's work primarily focussed on Celtic revival, her contribution to *The Evergreen* was abundant, contributing an average of three works per volume. (Kooistra, "General Introduction") Often Macleod's works were not regarded as factual, rather Macleod took inspiration from Celtic stories when writing her work. (Ferguson, 135) She was so successful in her Celtic revival that John Duncan's illustration *Anima Celtica* (Celtic spirit), featuring a woman writer surrounded by Celtic images is often associated with Fiona Macleod (Kooistra, "Critical Introduction"). This is powerful imagery in the sense that it centers a woman writer showing the forward thinking of *The Evergreen* that accepted women into literature.



John Duncan. *Anima Celtica* [Celtic Spirit]. *The Evergreen: A Northern Seasonal*. 1895. The Yellow Nineties Online. Public Domain.

Claim

Despite popular belief that William Sharp merely represents himself as a woman to express an inner identity, he also uses Fiona Macleod to his advantage as a means for representation to resonate with Victorian women by catering to the essentialist point of view. This is shown through the representation of woman in Macleod's work as well as her role as a woman is in relation to *The Evergreen* as a whole considering the context of nature prevalent to the entire magazine coinciding with essentialist ideas. Since essentialist ideas we're prevalent to this time, being a male author would have possibly lowered the success considering the themes held in these Celtic tales: nature, Beauty, love etc. In combination with this, creating a successful female writer was a deliberate choice made by

William Sharp to grab the attention of women and the Darwinist point of view that would have been emerging through the "new women" of the era, that women are entirely capable of being authors and working-class women

Essentialism

The Evergreen was a progressive little magazine attempting to question and push forward views held in the fin de siècle Victorian society. This includes challenging the subordination of Victorian woman (Kooistra, "Critical Introduction"). Biology in *The Evergreen* is a central theme of understanding the world through a scientific lens. Each season in each volume held a section analyzing the biology of the seasons, in this way women are also viewed from a biological standpoint which is what leads to *The Evergreen* having an essentialist view on gender roles. Essentialism embraces the idea that a woman's essence has fixed feminine characteristics such as being empathetic, nurturing, gentle, etc. (Kooistra, "Critical Introduction")

While *The Evergreen* did value an essentialist ideology, equality amongst women and men were also valued through a Darwinist ideology that would have been emerging at the time. (Kooistra, "Critical Introduction") Charles Darwin believed in women's education as a means of improvement, change, and evolution. Victorian women at the time of Darwin's release of *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*

were inspired by this ideology (33). However, people still felt inclined to stick to the status quo, which can be seen through this response to women's excitement into reading Darwin, "According to *The Globe* 'We dare not say what ladies ought to read or ought not to read nowadays, but we may venture to hint that they should not be seen floundering beyond their depth'". (Richardson 38) Women were still regarded as being inferior to men, which may explain why William Sharp felt that using Fiona Macleod as a successful female writer helped question these reactions while her success in taking on a role as a woman writer would have also been an inspiration to many of these women wanting to push the boundaries of their role in society.

***The Evergreen* and "The Moral Evolution of Sex"**

"The Moral Evolution of Sex" by Patrick Geddes is a sample of his views on gender, which is important to decipher considering he is also the author of *The Evergreen*, his views would be reflected in the entirety of the magazine. The "Moral Evolution of Sex" provides an offer of acceptance for the "new woman" in the Victorian era, which represented women as "independent, physically adept, and mentally acute, and able to work, study, and socialize on a par with men" (Rudnick) while still embracing the idea that motherhood for a woman is the essence of a woman's being and that is not to be considered a weakness or a negative thing. This is shown when Patrick

Geddes in the "Moral Evolution of Sex" states, "yet let us not over-pity the queen-mother" (Geddes 73), because a mother is happy to raise her child: "what mother but will smile and say [...] was I not happiest with my babes?" (73) In fact, even when a woman worker chooses to work, at the end of the day she still "carries the poison sting" which refers to a woman's reproductive organs. (73) This is to say that regardless of what a woman chooses to do with her life, it is an unchangeable fact that a woman has what a man lacks, the ability to give birth and that she cannot run from her essence.

The "Moral Evolution of Sex" further discusses that there is no difference to whether a woman fulfills domestic needs or those that are a part of society, it should not come as a surprise that women are capable of such a thing: "did you never see that every one of your domestics is a new woman, a worker-bee, who has gone out to labour in the world..." (74). It is not to say that women are better than men but rather they each have their own strengths and weakness, "that each sex not only expresses its own quality, its own superiority over the other, but uses this to develop the other" (80)

3 Celtic Tales by Fiona Macleod

Fiona Macleod created three works that will be examined in this exhibition: "The Anointed Man" vol. 1, "The Snow-Sleep of Angus Ogue" vol.4 and the "Kingdom of the Earth" vol. 3.

"The Anointed Man" is a tale about a man named Alasdair who despite losing three brothers within a span of three months still finds beauty in the world. He tells a story to a young female friend in order to explain how he became the anointed man; he was a child when he was touched by fairy ointment which causes him to see beauty and happiness even in the darkest of times.

"The Kingdom of the Earth" is a religious tale combining Christianity and paganism. It is about a blind old gypsy king who speaks to young Jesus (King of Elements). With Mary, his mother's tears, he is able to restore youth to the king and cure his sight. He then creates nine runes (Garden of God): Four winds, Deep seas, Lochs and rivers, Green trees, Man, Birth, Death, Soul, and mud, dross and the slime of evil.

"The Snow-Sleep of Angus Ogue" is a mythological tale about Angus Ogue the god of youth and beauty who sleeps a winter sleep for a thousand years. Other

Gods attempt to wake him but cannot, until he is finally awoken by Orchil.

Analysis

These three Celtic tales cater to the essentialist ideology of *The Evergreen* because of the role women play throughout through its themes of nurture, nature, love, and beauty. When looking at Fiona MacLeod's Celtic tales a male protagonist is dominant in the stories, however the women, although not in the forefront, are just as important to the stories. Both "The Snow-Sleep of Angus Ogue" and "The Anointed Man" are written from the point of view of women and the "Kingdom of the Earth" would take the voice of the narrator i.e. Fiona MacLeod. This is important to note because the narrator is the lens in which the story is told. By making it a woman in all three stories centralizes woman giving them importance. It shows that a woman is a capable and understanding person worth hearing a story from. It also gives women importance and helps carry the perspective that *The Evergreen* would want to represent: nature, love, and beauty, which would make sense to the readers of *The Evergreen*.

"The Anointed Man" has two female figures. The first plays the role of narrator and of a curious young woman in love with a man twice her age. She is confused about the anointed man and what seems to be a lack of empathy while looking upon a dreary land after the death of his two brothers and the sickness of another. The second female character is the Morag of the Falls, who also plays an empathetic character. She approaches the Anointed Man's father to explain to him that he is being foolish and explains what has happened to his son. (101-105) Both female characters play the role of an empathetic woman, showing the contrast from the lack of empathy in the men, especially that of the father. The essentialist idea of women is further developed by the maternal quality of the Morag of the Falls. Although she is not the mother or wife, the way she defends the anointed man, she provides an instinctual decision to act that way. Furthermore, it pushes forward the notion that women are curious beings who want to learn and understand, catering to the Darwinist view that women are deserving of education.

"The Snow-Sleep of Angus Ogue" consists of one female character which is the Orchil. She also plays the point of view of the story their role although not the protagonist plays more of an active role in the comparison to the other male characters. She seems to be a wise character, with knowledge of spring

(Angus Ogue) that the other gods lack. This brings together the idea of women to nature. She also evokes maternal qualities to Angus Ogue. While he sleeps three druids attempt to wake him, she protects him from their sounds as if a mother is protecting her child's sleep. When snow falls she puts a band around Ben Monach which seems symbolic to a mother placing a blanket over her child as they sleep to protect them from the cold (118-123). Finally, she is represented as mother nature. She at the end of the story awakes Angus Ogue by saying, "awake eternal spring" (122) her being given this dialogue emphasizes her as the one to be in control of the awakening of spring.

"The Kingdom of the Earth" has only one female character, Mary the Virgin, another maternal figure. She plays the role of supporting her son. Jesus is told by the gypsy king that nature is his mother and the mother of Mary (120-123).

These themes that take place in "The Anointed Man" and "The Snow-Sleep of Angus Ogue" and "The Kingdom of the Earth" are considered feminine through the essentialist lens. The women in these stories also follow these defined characteristics. Therefore, to the Victorian society, it wouldn't have made sense to see them being authored by a man, which is why it would seem probable that William Sharp would have used a Fiona MacLeod to resonate with Victorian society. In fact, he specifically states that: "had Fiona Macleod been revealed as a man the entire architecture built upon her would have collapsed." (Ferguson, 160) However, these characters are not weak characters or characters that can be dismissed, they are central to the story as much as the male characters. By joining the characters in this way Sharp shows the balance that *The Evergreen* values of woman and men needing one another and being equal in their own ways while putting emphasis especially on the maternal qualities such as empathy and nurturement that the "Moral Evolution of Sex" showed to be a women's essence.

Conclusion

Overall, evidence from these three Celtic stories shows that there was a commonality in the way Fiona Macleod portrayed female characters. She adhered to the fixed feminine characteristics assumed by the essentialist point of view. This would have been done deliberately seeing as William

Sharp was fully aware that revealing his true identity would ruin the archetype he had created. Sharp knew that these themes, especially in relation to *The Evergreen* being about nature, would make Fiona Macleod a success. The female characters although seem to be less important seeing as they are not the protagonists of the story still define the story, in the act of telling, and giving perspective on the male counterparts. This combination of male and females in the story also show the views of *The Evergreen* as a whole supporting the claim because Patrick Geddes was also in support for the essentialist and Darwinist ideologies which is seen through the "Moral Evolution of Sex" on the ideas that woman and men both play their own roles. Fiona Macleod success is representative of the support for women in literature and their capabilities and William Sharp knew that using this as a pseudonym would have helped to resonate with the woman in Victorian society.

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