

# A SCOTTISH GAELIC VERSION OF “SNOW-WHITE”

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## *Introduction*

The following story is part of a manuscript collection of folktales and other traditions from Atholl made in 1891 by Lady Evelyn Stewart-Murray, third daughter of John, seventh Duke of Atholl. The manuscripts were kindly presented to the School of Scottish Studies in 1958 by His Grace the present Duke of Atholl.

Lady Evelyn seems to have learned to speak and write Gaelic at an early age, and her collection of Atholl folklore was made when she was twenty-two to twenty-three years of age. Of the 240 separate items now in the School, nearly all seem to have been collected between February and December of the one year 1891, from some eighty different informants in the regions of Blair Atholl, Strathtay, Rannoch and Glen Lyon. Most of the pieces are short local historical and supernatural stories, interspersed with some songs, but there are also a few longer tales, not always of local origin, of which perhaps the most interesting is printed below. It is hoped that other stories from this collection may be printed later, with translations by Mr. Sorley Maclean who assisted the late Duke (Lord James) in preparing for an intended publication.

This story was taken down on Wednesday, 3rd June 1891, from the telling of Mrs. MacMillan, Bridge Cottage, Strathtay, one of Lady Evelyn's best informants. Lady Evelyn notes at the end of this story: "Mrs. MacMillan herself is a Badenoch woman, her father was a MacDonald, Badenoch, & her mother a Fraser from Lochaber. She learnt all her stories from her mother, at least mostly from her mother's mother, also Lochabar [*sic*]*—*so these are Lochabar tales." All her stories in the collection are full-length international tales: the others are versions of AT 313, AT 425, and the Gaelic oecotypes of AT 315 and AT 2030.

The interest of the present story is that it is one of the only two complete versions yet collected in Scotland (to my knowledge) of the story best known as *Snow-White* (AT 709). The other (Macleod 1888) is much shorter: as with most of this collector's tales, the source is unspecified and seems to have been slightly touched up. The greater length of our version is partly due to conflation with *The Maiden without Hands* (AT 706) an international type better known in Scotland and Ireland than *Snow-White*: Macleod's version shows no trace of this, but he mentions in a note (Macleod 1888:212 *n*) having heard another version of the story which evidently began like ours. They will be compared in the notes.

Ó Súilleabháin and Christiansen (1963:142) list 63 Irish versions of AT 709, including related stories ("Cf.") compared with 101 versions and "Cf." of AT 706. This shows that the story is relatively not very popular. A quick survey of the MSS in the Irish Folklore Commission reveals that some ten of these versions of AT 709 are only very remotely connected with the type, and include versions of the unclassified nursery story of *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. Of the rest, nearly a third lean on Grimm: in many cases they quote the English verses addressed to the mirror in the middle of a Gaelic narration, or use the name Snow-White in English. Another half-dozen are combinations of AT 709 with other international tales. A solid core remains, however, of versions which resemble the Scottish Gaelic ones in replacing the mirror of the international tale with a trout in a well; omitting the seven dwarfs or robbers but proceeding at once to the heroine's meeting with her future husband in the form of a cat, and his disenchantment; and letting the seemingly dead heroine be revived not by her husband but by a second wife whom he has married. Four versions (three English and one Irish, from Counties Louth, Galway and Cork) agree in calling the heroine "The Bright Star of Ireland" (*Réal Gheal na h-Éireann*) and in details of the plot, which suggests the influence of a chapbook at some stage. Various versions omit some details of the plot, or replace the trout by a mirror, but the second wife normally appears. There are also eight versions of a related type which appears as *Fios an Anraidh* in Scotland (McKay 1960: 250-7), where the heroine's jealous sisters, and not her stepmother, attempt to kill her.

The language of our story is comparatively simple, but there are occasional effective passages of alliteration, repetition or parallelism in the manner of Gaelic folktale: the formula at

the end is a particularly good example of a type rarer in Scotland than in Ireland. Some of these passages are almost impossible to translate, and I have treated them freely, sometimes preferring to render the effect of the sound rather than the sense. My colleague Mr. John MacInnes tells me that Lady Evelyn's orthography is in some ways quite a successful attempt to express the pronunciation of Perthshire Gaelic: I have therefore made hardly any changes in it, except to add accents and apostrophes, even allowing some spellings which are not self-consistent to stand.

*Lasair Gheug, Nighean Rìgh Eirinn*

Bha rìgh ann, 's phòs e ba'righinn, 's bha nighean aice. Chrìoch a' mhàthair an sin, 's phòs e ba'righinn eile. Bha 'bha'-righinn math g' a dalt'. Ach latha an sin thàinig 'n eachrais ùrlair<sup>1</sup> stigh, 's thuir i ris 'bha'righinn gur i bha gòrach bhi cho math g' a dalt'; "'s fios agad an latha 's bàs do'n rìgh, gur beag do chuid dhe'n oighreachd, seach cuid do dhalt'."

"Gu dé ghabhas deanamh dheth," thuir 'bha'righinn, "ma bhios rud math aig mo dhalt', gheibh mise pàirt."

"Ma bheir thu dhomhs' na shireas mi, nì mi rud dheth," thuir 'n eachrais ùrlair.

"Gu dé dh'iarras tu, chaillich?" thuir 'bha'righinn.

"Tha tullan<sup>2</sup> poit agam, cha bhì mi 'g a cur air ach ainmig; na nì tiugh do mhin i, 's na nì tana do dh'im i, 's làn mo chluais do chloimh."

"Gu dé nì tiugh do mhin i?"

"Na chinneas roimh sheachd sabhaltraichean coirc' ann an seachd bliadhn' do mhin."

"S gu dé nì tan' a dh'im i?" thuir a' bha'righinn.

"Na chinneas roimh sheachd bàthaichean cruiddh an seachd bliadhn' do dh'im."

"S gu dé chumas do chluais chloimh?"

"Na chinneas roimh sheachd cataichibh chaorach an seachd bliadhn' do chloimh."

"S mór a dh'iarr thu, chaillich," thuir 'bha'righinn, "ach ge mór e, gheibh thu e."

"Marbhaidh sinn a' ghalladh mhìol-chù aig an rìgh,<sup>3</sup> 's cuiridh sinn air bac na staidhreach i, gus am bì an rìgh an dùil gur e Lasair Gheug<sup>4</sup> rinn e. Cuiridh sinn trì briathran baistidh air Lasair Gheug, nach bì i 'g a cois, nach bì i air muin eich, 's nach bì i air talamh gorm<sup>5</sup> an latha dh'innseadh i e."

Thàinig an rìgh dhachaidh, 's chunnaic e 'ghalladh mhìol-chù air bac na staidhreach. Thuir, thuir, thuir an an rìgh; "Cò rinn an fheallach?"

"Cò bu dòcha leat na do nighean mhór fhéin?" thuir 'bha'righinn.

"Cha'n 'eil sin ann," thuir an rìgh, 's chaidh e laidhe, 's cha d'ith e mìr, 's cha d'òl e diar; 's ma's a much thàinig an latha, 's muiche na sin dh'éirich an rìgh, 's chaidh e da'n bheinn sheilg.

*Lasair Gheug, the King of Ireland's Daughter*

There was a king once, and he married a queen, and she had a daughter. The mother died then, and he married another queen. The queen was good to her stepdaughter. But one day the *eachrais ùrlair*<sup>1</sup> came in, and she said to the queen that she was a fool to be so good to her stepdaughter "when you know that the day the king dies, your share of the inheritance will be a small one to your stepdaughter's share."

"What can be done about it?" said the queen. "If my stepdaughter does well, I will get a share."

"If you give me what I ask," said the *eachrais ùrlair*, "I will do something about it."

"What would you want, old woman?" said the queen.

"I have a little saucepan, I only put it on occasionally: I want meal enough to thicken it, and butter enough to thin it, and the full of my ear of wool."

"How much meal will thicken it?"

"The increase of seven granaries of oats in seven years."

"How much butter will thin it?" said the queen.

"The increase of seven byres of cattle in seven years."

"And how much wool will your ear hold?"

"The increase of seven folds of sheep in seven years."

"You have asked much, old woman," said the queen, "but though it is much, you shall have it."

"We will kill the king's greyhound bitch<sup>3</sup> and leave it on the landing of the stairs, so that the king thinks that it is Lasair Gheug<sup>4</sup> who has done it. We will make Lasair Gheug swear three baptismal oaths, that she will not be on foot, she will not be on horseback, and she will not be on the green earth the day she tells of it."

The king came home, and saw the greyhound bitch on the landing. Roared, roared, roared the king: "Who did the deed?"

"Who do you think, but your own eldest daughter?" said the queen.

"That cannot be," said the king, and he went to bed, and he ate not a bite, and he drank not a drop: and if day came early, the king rose earlier than that, and went to the hill to hunt.

Thàinig an eachrais ùrlair stigh. “Gu dé,” thuirt ise, “a rinn an rìgh air a nighinn an raoir?”

“Cha d’rinn dad, a chaillich,” thuirt a’ bha’righinn. “Ga’ dhachaidh, ’s na faiceam tuille thu an déigh ’n fhearg a chuir thu air an rìgh an raoir.”

“Cuiridh mise geall,” thuirt an eachrais ùrlair, “gu’m marbh e ’nighean an nochd. Marbhaidh sinn ’n ailleire chrom dhubh aig an rìgh, ’s cuiridh sinn air bac na staidhreach i. Cuiridh sinn trì briathran baistidh air Lasair Gheug, nach bì i ’g a cois, nach bì i air muin eich, ’s nach bì i air talamh gorm an latha dh’innseadh i e.”

Thàinig an rìgh dhachaidh, ’s chunnaic e ’n ailleire chrom dhubh air bac na staidhreach. Thuirt, thuirt, thuirt an rìgh, “Cò rinn an fheallach?”

“Cò bu dòcha leat na do nighean mhór fhéin?” thuirt a’ bha’righinn.

“Cha’n ’eil sin ann,” thuirt an rìgh. Chaidh e laidhe, ’s cha d’ith e mìr, ’s cha d’òl e diar; ’s ma’s a much thàinig an latha, ’s muiche na sin a dh’éirich an rìgh, ’s chaidh e da’n bheinn sheilg.

Thàinig an eachrais ùrlair stigh. “Gu dé,” thuirt ise, “a rinn an rìgh air a nighinn an raoir?”

“Cha d’rinn dad, a chaillich,” thuirt a’ bha’righinn. “Ga’ dhachaidh, ’s na tig an so tuille, an déigh ’n fhearg a chuir thu air an rìgh an raoir.”

“Cuiridh mise geall,” thuirt an eachrais ùrlair, “gu’m marbh e ’nighean an nochd. Marbhaidh sinn,” thuirt ise, “do mhac-oighre fhé’, ’s cuiridh sinn air bac na staidhreach e. Cuiridh sinn na trì briathran baistidh air Lasair Gheug, nach bí i ’g a cois, nach bì i air muin eich, ’s nach bì i air talamh gorm an latha dh’innseadh i e.”

Thàinig an rìgh dhachaidh, matà, ’s chunnaic e ’mha-oighre air bac na staidhreach. Thuirt, thuirt, thuirt an rìgh, “Co rinn an fheallach?”

“Cò bu dòcha leat na do nighean mhór fhéin?” thuirt a’ bha’-righinn.

“Cha’n ’eil sin ann,” thuirt an rìgh. Chaidh e laidhe, ’s cha d’ith e mìr, ’s cha d’òl e diar; ’s ma’s a much thàinig an latha, ’s muiche na sin dh’éirich an rìgh, ’s chaidh e da’n bheinn sheilg.

Thàinig an eachrais ùrlair stigh. “Gu dé,” thuirt ise, “a rinn an rìgh air a nighinn an raoir?”

“Cha d’rinn dad, a chaillich,” thuirt a’ bha’righinn. “Ga’

In came the *eachrais ùrlair*. "What did the king do to his daughter last night?" she asked.

"He did nothing at all, old woman," said the queen. "Go home, and never let us see you again after the rage you put the king in last night."

"I will be bound that he will kill his daughter tonight," said the *eachrais ùrlair*. "We will kill the king's graceful black palfrey, and leave it on the landing. We will make Lasair Gheug swear three baptismal oaths, that she will not be on foot, she will not be on horseback, and she will not be on the green earth the day she tells of it."

The king came home, and saw the graceful black palfrey on the landing. Roared, roared, roared the king: "Who did the deed?"

"Who do you think, but your own eldest daughter?" said the queen.

"That cannot be," said the king. He went to bed, and he ate not a bite, and he drank not a drop: and if day came early, the king rose earlier than that, and went to the hill to hunt.

In came the *eachrais ùrlair*. "What did the king do to his daughter last night?" she asked.

"He did nothing at all, old woman," said the queen. "Go home, and don't come here again, after the rage you put the king in last night."

"I will be bound," said the *eachrais ùrlair*, "that he will kill his daughter tonight. We will kill your own eldest son," said she, "and leave him on the landing. We will make Lasair Gheug swear three baptismal oaths, that she will not be on foot, she will not be on horseback, and she will not be on the green earth the day she tells of it."

The king came home, then, and saw his eldest son on the landing. Roared, roared, roared the king: "Who did the deed?"

"Who do you think, but your own eldest daughter?" said the queen.

"That cannot be," said the king. He went to bed, and he ate not a bite, and he drank not a drop: and if day came early, the king rose earlier than that, and went to the hill to hunt.

In came the *eachrais ùrlair*. "What did the king do to his daughter last night?" she asked.

"He did nothing at all, old woman," said the queen. "Go



dhachaidh, 's na tig an so tuille, an déigh 'n fhearg a chuir thu air an rìgh an raoir."

"Cuiridh mise geall," thuirt an eachrais ùrlair, "gu 'm marbh e 'nighean an nochd. Gabhaidh tus' ort gu bheil thu gu trom, tinn, teth."

Chaidh gill' air muin eich, 's each air muin gill', dh'iarraidh an rìgh. Thàinig an rìgh. Dh'fharraid an rìgh dhe'n bha'righinn, gu dé bha fo sheachd ranna rudha<sup>6</sup> an domhain a ghabhadh faighinn dhàs', dheanadh feum dhi, nach fhaigheadh e.

"Tha sin ann," thuirt ise, "nì feum dhomh, ach an rud a nì feum dhomh, cha toir thus' dhomh e."

"Ma tha ann," thuirt e, "na nì feum dhuit, gheibh thu e."

"Thoir dhomh," thuirt a' bha'righinn, "cridhe 's gruthan Lasair Gheug, nighean rìgh Eirinn."

"*Well,*" thuirt an rìgh, "'s goirt leam sin thoirt dhuit, ach gheibh thu sin," thuirt an rìgh. Chaidh e far an robh an cocaire claon, ruadh, 's dh'fharraid e dheth an cuireadh e aon oidhche seachad air a leanabh.

"Cuiridh," thuirt an cocaire. Mharbh iad uircean muc, 's thug iad as an cridhe 's an gruthan. Chuir iad 'n fhuil aige air aodach Lasair Gheug. Chaidh an rìgh dhachaidh leis 'chridhe 's leis a' ghruthan, 's thug e dha 'n bha'righinn e. Bha 'bha'righinn an sin cho math 's bha i riamh.

Chaidh an rìgh rithist far an robh an cocaire claon, ruadh, 's dh'fharraid e dheth an cuireadh e aon oidhche seachad air a leanabh rithist. Thuirt an cocaire gu 'n cuireadh.<sup>7</sup> 'N ath latha thug an rìgh leis an t-each b'fhcarr bha 'san stàbull, peic òir, agus peic airgid, 's Lasair Gheug. Ràinig e 'choille mhór, gun cheann, gun chrìoch, agus bha e dol fhàgail Lasair Gheug ann an sin. Gearr e bàrr té dhe na corragan dhi.<sup>8</sup>

"An goirt leat sid, a nighean?" thuirt e.

"Cha ghoirt, 'athair," thuirt ise, "bho 'n 'se sibhse a rinn e."

"'S goirte na sin leams'," thuirt an rìgh, "'ghalladh mhìol-chù chur a dhith orm." Thug e 'n so corrag eile dhi.

"An goirt leat sid, a nighean?"

"Cha ghoirt, 'athair, bho'n 'se sibhse a rinn e."

"'S goirte na sin leams' 'n ailleire chrom, dhubh, chur a dhith orm."

Thug e 'n sin corrag eile dhi.

"An goirt leat sid, a nighean?" thuirt an rìgh.



home, and don't come here again, after the rage you put the king in last night."

"I will be bound," said the *eachrais ùrlair*, "that he will kill his daughter tonight. You must pretend that you are sick, sore and sorry."

Men leapt on horses and horses on men to look for the king. The king came. He asked the queen what in the seven continents of the world he could get to help her, that he would not get.

"There is something to help me," said she, "but what will help me you will not give me."

"If there is something to help you," said he, "you shall have it."

"Give me the heart and liver of Lasair Gheug, the king of Ireland's daughter," said the queen.

"Well," said the king, "it hurts me to give you that, but you shall have that," said the king. He went to the squinting sandy cook and asked him if he would hide his child for one night.

"I will," said the cook. They killed a sucking pig, and they took out the heart and liver. They put its blood on Lasair Gheug's clothes. The king went home with the heart and the liver, and gave it to the queen. Then the queen was as well as she had ever been.

The king went again to the squinting sandy cook, and he asked him if he would hide his child for one night again. The cook said he would.<sup>7</sup> Next day the king took with him the best horse in the stable, a peck of gold, a peck of silver, and Lasair Gheug. He came to a great forest, with no edge and no end, and he was going to leave Lasair Gheug there. He cut off the end of one of her fingers.<sup>8</sup>

"Does that hurt you, daughter?" he said.

"It doesn't hurt me, father," she said, "because it is you who did it."

"It hurts me more," said the king, "to have lost the greyhound bitch." With that he cut off another of her fingers.

"Does that hurt you, daughter?"

"It doesn't hurt me, father, because it is you who did it."

"It hurts me more than that to have lost the graceful black palfrey." With that he cut off another of her fingers.

"Does that hurt you, daughter?" said the king.

“Cha ghoirt, ’athair,” thuirt ise, “bho ’n ’se sibhse a rinn e.”

“’S goirte na sin leamsa,” thuirt e, “mo mhac-oighre chur a dhìth orm.” Thug e dhi am peic òir ’s am peic airgid, ’s dh’fhàg e ’n sin i. Chaidh e dhachaidh, ’s laidh e dall, bodhar air an leabaidh.

Bha Lasair Gheug gabhail eagail anns a’ choill gu ’n tigeadh beathaichean fiadhaich a dh’itheadh i. A’ chraobh bu mhù chunnaic i anns a’ choill, dhìrich i ’sa’ chraoibh. Cha robh i fad an sin, dar chunnaic i dà-chat-dheug a’ tighinn, ’s cat cam glas comhladh riù, bó aca agus coire, agus chuir iad teine air bun na craoibhe anns an robh ise. ’S mharbh iad ’bhó, ’s chuir iad anns a’ choire i ’g a bruich’. Bha ’n smuid a’ dìreadh, ’s bha na corragan aices’ a’ fàs blàth. Thòisich iad air sileadh fala, agus bha boinne ’s boinne tuiteam anns a’ choire. Thuirt an cat cam glas ri fear dhe na cait eile dhol ’n àird ’n a chraoibh choimhead ’dé bh’ann; gu’n robh fuil rìgh no ridir’ a’ tuiteam anns a choire. Chaidh an cat an àird. Thug ise làn duirn a dh’òr, ’s làn duirn a dh’airgid air son nach innseadh e gu ’n robh i ann. Ach cha robh ’n fhuil sgur. Chuir an cat cam glas h-uile gin ann, fear an déigh fir, gus an deach na dhà-dheug ’n àird, ’s bha iad uile faighinn làn duirn òir, ’s làn duirn airgid. Chaidh an cat cam glas fhé’ an aird, ’s fhuair e Lasair Gheug, ’s thug e mhàn i.

Dar bha ’n t-suipeir deas, dh’fharraid an cat cam, glas dhi, am bu docha leatha a suipeir ghabhail comhladh ris-sa’, no comhladh ri càch. Thuirt i gu ’m b’fhearr leatha a suipeir ghabhail comhladh ris fhé’, gur e bu choltaiche rithe. Ghabh iad an suipeir, ’s bha iad an sin dol laidhe. Dh’fharraid an cat cam, glas dhi, co dhiubh am bu docha leatha laidhe comhladh ris-s’, no laidhe comhladh ri cach. Thuirt i gu ’m bu docha leatha dol comhladh ris fhé’, gur e bu choltaiche rithe.<sup>9</sup> Chaidh iad a laidhe, ’s dar dh’éirich iad ’sa mhadainn, ’s ann bha iad an Lochlann. ’S e mac rìgh Lochlainn bha anns a’ chat cham, ghlas, agus a dhà-fhleasgach-dheug comhladh ris. ’S ann fo gheasan aig a mhuime bha iad, agus bha an so na geasan fuasgailte.

Phòs iad an sin, ’s bha triùir mac aig Lasair Gheug. Dh’iarr i mar fhàbhar air an rìgh gun am baisteadh.

Bha fuaran anns a’ gharadh aig rìgh Eirinn, ’s bha breac anns an fhuaran, ’s bhiodh a’ bha’righinn dol h-uile bliadhna ’g a glanadh do’n fhuaran.<sup>10</sup> Agus chaidh i ’n tarring so ann,

“It doesn’t hurt me, father,” said she, “because it is you who did it.”

“It hurts me more,” said he, “to have lost my eldest son.” He gave her the peck of gold and the peck of silver, and he left her there. He went home, and he lay down on his bed, blind and deaf [to the world].

Lasair Gheug was frightened in the forest that wild beasts would come and eat her. The highest tree she could see in the forest, she climbed that tree. She was not there long when she saw twelve cats coming, and a one-eyed grey cat along with them. They had a cow and a cauldron, and they lit a fire at the foot of the tree she was in. They killed the cow and put it in the cauldron to cook. The steam was rising, and her fingers were getting warm. She began to bleed, and drop after drop fell into the cauldron. The one-eyed grey cat told one of the other cats to go up the tree and see what was there: for king’s blood or knight’s blood was falling into the cauldron. The cat went up. She gave it a handful of gold and a handful of silver not to tell that she was there. But the blood would not stop. The one-eyed grey cat sent every one of them up, one after another, until all twelve had been up, and they all got a handful of gold and a handful of silver. The one-eyed grey cat climbed up himself, and he found Lasair Gheug and brought her down.

When the supper was ready, the one-eyed grey cat asked her whether she would rather have her supper with him, or with the others. She said she would rather have her supper with him, he was the one she liked the look of best. They had their supper, and then they were going to bed. The one-eyed grey cat asked her which she would rather, to go to bed with him, or to sleep with the others. She said she would rather go with him, he was the one she liked the look of best. They went to bed, and when they got up in the morning, they were in Lochlann. The one-eyed grey cat was really the king of Lochlann’s son, and his twelve squires along with him.<sup>9</sup> They had been bewitched by his stepmother, and now the spell was loosed.

They were married then, and Lasair Gheug had three sons. She asked the king as a favour not to have them christened.

There was a well in the king of Ireland’s garden, and there was a trout in the well, and the queen used to go every year to wash in the well.<sup>10</sup> She went there this time, and when she

's dar ghlan i i fhé', thuir i ris a' bhreac, "A bhriccein bhig, a bhriccein bhig," thuir i, "nach mise," thuir i, "a' bhean a's briaigh' bha riamh an Eirinn?"

"Matà, gu dearbh fhé', cha tù," thuir am breac, "'s Lasair Gheug, nighean rìgh Eirinn beò."

"Bheil i beò fhathast?" thuir 'bha'righinn.

"Thà, 's bìdh i, ge b'oil leat," thuir am breac. "Tha i ann an Lochlann, 's triùir cloinne gun bhaisteadh aice."

"Cuiridh mise," thuir a' bha'righinn, "lìon tarruing roimpe', agus lìon taimhleis romhads'."<sup>11</sup>

"Dh'fhiach thu ri sin a dhianamh uair no dhà roimhe," thuir am breac, "ach cha deach e leat fhathast," thuir e, "'s ged tha mise so an dràs, 's iomad struth àrd air am bì mi mu 's an tig an oidhche."

Chaidh a' bha'righinn dachaidh, 's bha i trod ris an rìgh gu 'n d'thug e creidsinn oirre 's gu 'n d'thug e cridhe 's gruthan Lasair Gheug dhi, 's i beò slàn ann an Lochlann fhathast. Bha i toileach gu'n rachadh an rìgh comhladh rithe choimhead air Lasair Gheug, ach cha 'n éireadh an rìgh, 's cha chreideadh e gu 'n robh i ann. Chuir i a dà-mhaighdean-deug air falbh da Lochlann, 's thug i bocsa' do'n mhaighdean aice fhé' air son thoirt ga Lasair Gheug, 's shir i oirre innse dhi gun 'fhosgladh gus am biodh i làmh ri 'triùir cloinne gun bhaisteadh.

Bha Lasair Gheug 'na suidhe anns an uinneig 'fuaigheal. Chunnaic i suaicheantas a h-athar a' tighinn. Cha robh fhios aice leis an toileachadh co aca an rachadh i mach air an dorus, no an rachadh i mach air 'n uinneig. Thug iad dhi am bocsa, 's leis an toileachadh a rinn i ris, cha d'fhuirich Lasair Gheug ri bhi làmh ri 'triùir cloinne gun bhaisteadh. Dh'fhosgail i am bocsa dar dh'fhalbh iads' dhachaidh. Dar dh'fhosgail i am bocsa, bha tri gràinn' sìolan<sup>12</sup> . . . lean sìolan 'n eigh . . . fear dhiù an clàr a h-aodainn, 's fear eile anns gach dearn', 's thuit i fuar, marbh.

Thàinig an rìgh dhachaidh, 's fhuair e marbh i. Cheanna-saicheadh e duine b'fhearr ciall na e. Chaleigeadh e 'tiodhlacadh leis a' mheas a bha aige oirre. Chuir e an cist luaidhe i, 's bha i glaist' aige ann an rùm. Bha e dol much 's anmoch 'g a coimhead. Bhiodh a choltach dà uair na b'fhearr dar rachadh e stigh na dar thigeadh e mach. Bha sin treis air dol seachad, agus thug a chuideachd air gu 'n do phòs e rithist. Thug e h-uile iuchair a bha 's an tigh dha 'n bha'righinn ach iuchair an rùm so. Bha i gabhail ioghantais gu dé bha anns an rùm, dar bhiodh a choltach cho don' tighinn a mach, seach mar

had washed, she said to the trout, "Little trout, little trout," said she, "am not I," said she; "the most beautiful woman that ever was in Ireland?"

"Indeed and indeed then, you are not," said the trout, "while Lasair Gheug, the king of Ireland's daughter, is alive."

"Is she alive still?" said the queen.

"She is, and will be in spite of you," said the trout. "She is in Lochlann, and has three unchristened children."

"I will set a snare to catch her," said the queen, "and a net to destroy you."

"You have tried to do that once or twice before," said the trout, "but you haven't managed it yet," said he, "and though I am here now, many is the mighty water I can be on before night comes."

The queen went home, and she gave the king a piece of her mind for making her believe that he had given her Lasair Gheug's heart and liver, when she was alive and well in Lochlann still. She wanted the king to go with her to see Lasair Gheug, but the king would not budge, and he would not believe that she was there. She sent her twelve maids-in-waiting to Lochlann, and she gave a box to her own maid to give Lasair Gheug, and she asked her to tell her not to open it until she was with her three unchristened children.

Lasair Gheug was sitting at the window sewing. She saw her father's banner coming. In her delight she did not know whether to run out of the door or fly out of the window. They gave her the box, and she was so delighted with it that she did not wait to be with her three unchristened children. She opened the box when the others had gone home. When she opened the box, there were three grains in it<sup>12</sup> . . . one grain of ice stuck in her forehead and another in each of her palms, and she fell dead and cold.

The king came home and found her dead. That would have beaten a wiser man than he. He was so fond of her, he would not let her be buried. He put her in a leaden coffin and kept it locked up in a room. He used to visit her early and late. He used to look twice as well when he went in as when he came out. This had been going on for a while when his companions persuaded him to marry again. He gave every key in the house to the queen, except the key of that room. She wondered what was in the room, when he looked so poorly coming out, compared with the way he was when he went in. She told one

bhiodh e dol stigh. Thuirt i ri fear do na giullan latha 'n sin, da bhiodh e cluith timchioll air an rìgh, dh'fhiachainn am faigheadh e 'n iuchair so a ghoid á phòcaid. Ghoid am balach 'n iuchair, 's thug e g'a mhuime i. Chaidh i stigh, is 's e bha sin, 'cheud bhean bha aige an rìgh. Sheall i mu 'n cuairt oirre; chunnaic i sìolan 'n eigh an clar a h-aodainn, 's ghabh i prìne, 's phic i as e. Thug an té bha 's a chist, plogaid. Chunnaic i fear eile anns an dàrn' dearn' aice, 's thug i as e. Dh'éirich i sin 'n a suidhe. Fhuair i sin fear eile anns an dearn' cile, 's thug i as e. Bha i 'n sin cho math 's bha i riamh. Thug i leatha an so mach i, 's chuir i da rùm eile i. Chuir i 'n giullan leis an iuchair an coinnimh 'athar dar bhiodh e tighinn dachaidh, gu 'n cuireadh e 'na phòcaid i gun fhios da rithist.

Thàinig an rìgh dhachaidh, b'e cheud rud e dhol stigh do 'n rùm so mar b'àbhaist. Cha robh dad sin. Thàinig e mach sin dh' fharraid gu dé chaidh dheanamh ris an rud 'bha anns an rùm. Thuirt a' bha'righinn nach d'fhuair ise iuchair an rùm sin riamh. Dh'fharraid i gu dé bha anns an rùm. Thuirt e gu 'n robh 'cheud bhean bha aige, 's leis a' ghaol 'bh' aige oirre nach tiodhlaiceadh e i, gu 'm bu mhath leis bhi 'g a faicinn ged bha i marbh fhé'.

“Gu dé,” thuirt a' bha'righinn, “a bheir thu dhomhs', ma gheibh thu beò i?”

“Cha 'n 'eil sùil agam,” thuirt e, “ri 'faicinn beò, ach bu toil leam bhi 'g a faicinn ged a bha i marbh.”

Chaidh a' bha'righinn an so, agus thug i leatha i air a gàirdean, beò, slàn. Cha robh fios aige an sin co dhiù rachadh e gal no gàireachdaich leis an toileachadh. Thuirt 'bha'righinn eile an so gu 'm faodadh ise falbh dhachaidh, nach robh an corr feum oirre ann an sid. Thuirt Lasair Gheug nach rachadh i dhachaidh, gu'm fanadh i comhladh rith-s', gu'm biodh bòrd 's copan cho math rith-s', h-uile latha fhad 's bhiodh i beò.

Air chionn so bha bliadhn' eile air dol seachad; chaidh ba'righinn Eirinn da 'n fhuaran 'g a glanadh an so rithist.

“A bhricein bhig, a bhricein bhig,” thuirt ise, “nach mise bean a's briaigh' bha riamh an Eirinn?”

“Cha tù, gu dearbh fhé’,” thuirt am breac, “'s Lasair Gheug, nighean rìgh Eirinn beò.”

“Bheil i beò fhathast?” thuirt ise.

“O thà, 's bìdh i, ge b'oil leat,” thuirt am breac.

“Cuiridh mise,” thuirt ise, “lìon tharruing roimpes' 's lìon taimhleis romhads'.”



of the boys one day, if he was playing near the king, to see if he could manage to steal that key out of his pocket. The lad stole the key and gave it to his stepmother. She went in, and what was there but the king's first wife. She looked her over: she saw the grain of ice in her forehead and she took a pin and picked it out. The woman in the coffin gave a sigh. She saw another one in one of her palms, and took it out. The woman sat up. She found another one in the other palm, and took it out. Then she was as well as she had ever been. She brought her out with her and put her in another room. She sent the boy with the key to meet his father coming home and put it back in his pocket without his knowledge.

The king came home. The first thing he did was to go into that room as usual. There was nothing there. He came out then to ask what had happened to the thing that had been in the room. The queen said she had never had the key of that room. She asked what had been in the room. He said it was his first wife, and with the love he had for her he would not bury her: he liked to see her, dead though she was.

"What will you give me," said the queen, "if I bring you her alive?"

"I don't expect to see her alive," said he, "but I would be glad to see her even though she were dead."

The queen went then and brought her in on her arm, alive and well. He did not know whether to laugh or cry with his delight. The other queen said then that she might as well go home, there was no more need for her there. Lasair Gheug said that she was not to go home: she should stay along with her, and should have food and drink as good as herself, every day as long as she lived.

At the end of this another year had gone by. The queen of Ireland went to the well to wash there again.

"Little trout, little trout," said she, "am not I the most beautiful woman that ever was in Ireland?"

"Indeed and indeed you are not," said the trout, "while Lasair Gheug, the king of Ireland's daughter, is alive."

"Is she alive still?" said she.

"Oh yes, and she will be in spite of you," said the trout.

"I will set a snare to catch her," said the queen, "and a net to destroy you."



“Dh’fhiach thu ri sin a dhianamh uair no dhà roimhe so,” thuirt am breac, “ach cha deach e leat fhathast,” thuirt e. “Gad tha mise an so fhathast, ’s iomad struth àrd air am bì mi ma’s an tig an oidhche.”

Chaidh a’ bha’righinn dhachaidh an so, ’s chuir i ’n rìgh air chois, ’s dh’fhalbh iad choimhead air Lasair Gheug. Bha Lasair Gheug ’na suidhe ’san uinneig an tarruing so, ach cha d’rinn i toileachadh sam bith ri suaicheantas ’h-athar.

Dar thàinig Di-Dòmhnach, chaidh iad ’n eaglais. Chuir ise feadhainn dh’iarraidh torc neimh’ bha anns a’ choill; feadhainn eile dh’iarraidh connadh, maidean ’s rud dheanadh teine mór. Fhuair i an torc neimh’, chaidh i air muin an tuirc neimh’, chaidh i stigh air dàrn’ dorus na h-eaglaise, ’s mach air an dorus eile. Dh’éigh i air a triùir chloinne gun bhaisteadh làmh rithe.<sup>13</sup>

“Cha’n ann do ghin sam bith,” thuirt ise, “tha mise dol dh’innse mo naigheachd, ach dhuibhse, ’thriùir chloinn’ gun bhaisteadh.

“Dar bha mise an rìoghachd m’athar fhé’ ann an Eirinn, mharbh mo mhuime agus ’n eachrais ùrlair a’ ghalladh mhiol-choin aig m’athair, chuir iad air bac na staidhreach i, chuir iad trì briathran baistidh orms’, nach bithinn ’g am chois, ’s nach bithinn air muin eich, ’s nach bithinn air talamh gorm an latha dh’innsinn e. Ach tha mise air muin an tuirc nei’. Bha iad an dùil gu ’m marbhadh m’athair mise, ach cha do mharbh m’athair mise fhathast.”

Chaidh i stigh air an dàrn’ dorus, agus chaidh i mach air an dorus eile, agus dh’éigh i air a triùir chloinn’ gun bhaisteadh làmh rithe.

“Cha ’n ann do ghin sam bith,” thuirt i, “tha mise dol dh’innse mo naigheachd, ach dhuibhs’, a thriùir chloinn’ gun bhaisteadh.

“Dar bha mise an rìoghachd m’athar fhé’ ann an Eirinn, mharbh mo mhuime ’s an eachrais ùrlair ’n ailleire chrom dhubh aig m’athair, ’s chuir iad air bac na staidhreach i. Chuir iad trì briathran baistidh orms’, nach bithinn ’g am chois, ’s nach bithinn air muin eich, ’s nach bithinn air talamh gorm an latha dh’innsinn e. Ach tha mise air muin an tuirc nei’. Bha iad an dùil gu ’m marbhadh m’athair mise, ach cha do mharbh m’athair mise fhathast.”

Chaidh i stigh air an dàrn’ dorus, agus chaidh i mach air an dorus eile, agus dh’éigh i air a triùir chloinn’ gun bhaisteadh làmh rithe.

"You have tried to do that once or twice before," said the trout, "but you haven't managed it yet," said he. "Though I am here now, many is the mighty water I can be on before night comes."

The queen went home then, and she got the king moving, and they went to visit Lasair Gheug. Lasair Gheug was sitting at the window this time, but she showed no pleasure at all at [the sight of] her father's banner.

When Sunday came, they went to church. She had sent people to catch a wild boar that was in the wood, and others to get faggots and sticks and stuff to make a big fire. She got the wild boar: she got on to the boar's back, went in at one door of the church and out at the other door. She called her three unchristened children to her side.<sup>13</sup>

"I am not going to tell my story to anyone at all," said she, "but to you three unchristened children.

"When I was in my own father's kingdom in Ireland, my stepmother and the *eachrais ùrlair* killed my father's greyhound bitch and left it on the landing. They made me swear three baptismal oaths, that I would not be on foot, I would not be on horseback, and I would not be on the green earth the day I told of it. But I am on the wild boar's back. They expected that my father would kill me, but my father has not killed me yet."

She went in at one door, and she went out at the other door, and she called her three unchristened children along with her.

"I am not going to tell my story to anyone at all," said she, "but to you three unchristened children.

"When I was in my own father's kingdom in Ireland, my stepmother and the *eachrais ùrlair* killed my father's graceful black palfrey and left it on the landing. They made me swear three baptismal oaths, that I would not be on foot, I would not be on horseback, and I would not be on the green earth the day I told of it. But I am on the wild boar's back. They expected that my father would kill me, but my father has not killed me yet."

She went in at one door, and she went out at the other door, and she called her three unchristened children along with her.

“Cha ’n ann do ghin sam bith,” thuirt i, “tha mise dol dh’innse mo naigheachd, ach dhuibhs’, a thriuir chloinn’ gun bhaisteadh.

“Dar bha mise an rìoghachd m’athar fhé’ ann an Eirinn, mharbh mo mhuime ’s an eachrais ùrlair mo bhràthair mór, ’s chuir iad air bac na staidhreach e. Chuir iad trì briathran baistidh orms’, nach bithinn ’g am chois, ’s nach bithinn air muin eich, ’s nach bithinn air talamh gorm an latha dh’innsinn e. Ach tha mise air muin an tuirc nei’. Bha iad an dùil gu ’m marbhadh m’athair mise, ach cha do mharbh m’athair mise fhathast. Nis,” thuirt i, “cha’n ’eil tuille agam ri innse dhuibh.”

Chaidh an torc nei’ leigeil as. Dar thàinig iad a mach as an eaglais, chaidh beirsinn air ba’righinn Eirinn, agus a losgadh ’s an teine.

Dar bha ’n rìgh dol dachaidh, thuirt e ri ’nighean, Lasair Gheug, gur don’ a rinn i air, gu’n d’thàinig e bho ’n tigh ’s bean aige, ’s gu’n robh e dol dachaidh nis gun bhean idir. Agus thuirt Lasair Gheug: “Cha’n ann mar sin a bha, thàinig sibh an so le béisd, ach tha ban-chomp’ach agamsa, ’s gheibh sibh i, ’s théid sibh dhachaidh le bean.”<sup>14</sup> ’S rinn iad banais mhór, ghreadhnach, aighearach, aithidh, fhialaidh, ioghantach; latha ’s bliadhn’ air chumail di. Fhuair mise brògan pàipeir orm, ’s cabhsair ghloineachan, crioman ìme air éibhleag, ’s brochan an craoithleag, còt’ mór muill, còt’ goiread blàthaich. Cha deach mi ach goirid dar thuit mi, ’s bhris an cabhsair ghloineachan, dhòirt an còt’ goirid blàthaich, leagh an t-ìm air an éibhleag, thàinig oiteag gaoithe, ’s thug e air falbh an còt’ mór muill. Dh’fhalbh h-uile dad a bh’ann, ’s bha mise cho falaimh ’s bha mi roimhe. ’S dh’fhàg mi ’n sin iad.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The *eachrais ùrlair* (*eachlach ùrlair*) is a commonplace of Gaelic folktale: she is the character who first inspires the stepmother to wickedness. Sometimes she is called the henwife (*cailleach nan cearc*) as in Irish versions. See McKay 1940:492-9 for an exhaustive discussion. Her demand for a seemingly small quantity of food and wool which then turns out to be immense is part of the convention.

<sup>2</sup> Note in MS: “*poit bheag*”.

<sup>3</sup> This motif is apparently borrowed from AT 706: compare for instance the version of the latter in McKay 1940:308-29, where the queen accuses her stepdaughter of killing her brother and setting fire to the orchard. The oath she swears is normally not to tell the truth to any Christian soul: hence the insistence on the unchristened children later in the story, though they are not really required in this version, and

“I am not going to tell my story to anyone at all,” said she, “but to you three unchristened children.

“When I was in my own father’s kingdom in Ireland, my stepmother and the *eachrais ùrlair* killed my eldest brother and left him on the landing. They made me swear three baptismal oaths, that I would not be on foot, I would not be on horseback, and I would not be on the green earth the day I told of it. But I am on the wild boar’s back. They expected that my father would kill me, but my father has not killed me yet. Now,” said she, “I have nothing more to tell you.”

The wild boar was set free. When they came out of the church, the queen of Ireland was caught and burnt in the fire.

When the king was going home, he said to his daughter, Lasair Gheug, that she had done ill by him: he had come from home with a wife, and he was going home now without one. And Lasair Gheug said: “It wasn’t that way: you came here with a monster, but I have a woman friend, and you shall have her, and you will go home with a wife.”<sup>14</sup> And they made a great, merry, mirthful, happy, hospitable, wonderful wedding: it was kept up for a year and a day. I got shoes of paper there on a glass pavement, a bit of butter on an ember, porridge in a creel, a greatcoat of chaff and a short coat of buttermilk. I hadn’t gone far when I fell, and the glass pavement broke, the short coat of buttermilk spilt, the butter melted on the ember, a gust of wind came and blew away the greatcoat of chaff. All I had had was gone, and I was as poor as I was to start with. And I left them there.

possibly the phrase “*briathran baistidh*”. Apparently, however, the story also existed in an intermediate form: the other version which Macleod (1888: 212 n.) had heard seems to have borrowed this opening. Instead of opening logically like the printed version with the trout telling the queen that her daughter is more beautiful and so inspiring her to kill her, “the fish is replaced by a witch or wise woman, who bewitches the daughter and *tries to make her kill* the king’s three favourite animals—a horse, dog and cock, which the mother herself has to do, but she accuses her daughter to the king, and *suggests the punishment* of eating her heart.” The passages which I have italicised seem to deviate from our version and AT 706: possibly Macleod or the teller did not fully understand his source. According to Macleod, the end of the story was as in the version he printed, without the other borrowings from AT 706 (see notes 8 and 13).

- <sup>4</sup> *Lasair Gheug*, "Flame of Branches", seems to be a variant of *Lasair Dhearg* (*Fhion-dhearg*, *Fhionn-dhearg*), "Red (Wine-red, White-red) Flame", a frequent name for heroines at least in Irish tales: in other words, the red rather than the white of the heroine is what she is known for. In Macleod her name is *Craobh-Òir* "Gold Tree", and the queen is *Craobh-Airgid* "Silver Tree". The latter is there the heroine's own mother, not her stepmother. This makes her persecution of her daughter more unnatural, but could be a more primitive form of the motif: compare the versions of AT 706, AT 510 (*Cinderella*), and other tales where the king persecutes his own daughter because she will not marry him (e.g. Campbell 1890: I, 226-36).
- <sup>5</sup> *Gorm* or *glas* are given as alternatives in the MS throughout: both are used in Gaelic to describe the colour of grass, some dialects preferring the one and some the other.
- <sup>6</sup> Usually written *seachd ranna ruadh*, but as the meaning of the epithet is not clear I have left the MS spelling.
- <sup>7</sup> There seems no good reason for the repetition of these sentences: perhaps originally the queen was not convinced by the heart which was first shown her. This happens in the Irish versions which seem to be based on a chapbook: the king's two "niggers" kill a lapdog, but the trout tells the queen that she ate a lapdog's heart: the second time two other "niggers" quarrel, and one kills the other and gives the queen his heart, which is convincingly human.
- <sup>8</sup> The mutilation of the daughter is part of the borrowing from AT 706. The normal form of the motif is that the girl's hands are cut off. The softening here to cutting off fingers may be simply due to the desire to associate each mutilation with one of the crimes of which she has been accused: she could not lose three hands. However, the less crippling nature of the mutilation means that the later episode of AT 706 where the hands are miraculously restored has dropped out, or has never been borrowed. The heroine's endurance contrasts with other Scottish versions (McKay 1940:312; *Nic Iain* 1934:47) where she prays that a thorn may go into her father's foot until her hand takes it out.
- <sup>9</sup> This motif may also be borrowed from a variant of AT 706, where the heroine is sometimes found by her future husband in a tree (McKay 1940:312). In Irish versions, however, the heroine normally meets the prince in the form of a cat, though the details of the disenchantment vary. For the band of cats with their one-eyed leader compare Campbell 1890: I, 108-11, 121-2, where however they are wholly malevolent. In Macleod's versions of AT 709 the connecting motif is different: in the printed text a foreign prince simply comes and asks the heroine's hand from her father, who gives her to him without the knowledge of her mother, who believes her to be dead. In the note "the daughter runs away and hides with the henwife of a prince, who discovers and marries her". I have translated "*gur e bu choltaiche rithe*" as if it were *coltaiche leatha*: this seems more likely than the class-conscious statement that "he was more like her".
- <sup>10</sup> The trout (or salmon) in the well is a typical figure of Gaelic folklore. From Old Irish sources (see O'Rahilly 1946: 322-3) it has come into ballads (Campbell 1872: 210, v. 17-18) and hero-tales (Craig 1944:12). This archaic motif is not likely to be a recent substitute for the usual



speaking mirror of the international tale. The fish is addressed, not actually in a rhyme like the German mirror, but in a sort of incantation, more clearly alliterative in Macleod: "a bhricein, a bhalaich bhig, bhòidheich . . ." In the latter version the trout is introduced at the very beginning, providing a single motive for the queen's attempts to kill her daughter, as the international tale, rather than the confusion of motives (envy of her inheritance and of her beauty) here.

- <sup>11</sup> I have translated very freely and as though *lìon taimhleis* were *lìon t'aimhleis* "net of thy destruction", but there is probably some contrast between *lìon tarruing* "draw-net" (something which might be used to catch animals?) and *lìon taimhleis* (a net for fish? cf. *tàbh?*).
- <sup>12</sup> The text is confused here, but evidently there were three grains of ice (*siolain an eigh*) or hailstones which flew out of the box and buried themselves in the heroine's forehead and the palms of her hands. In Macleod's version the queen comes to see her: the heroine shuts herself up and will not see her, but eventually puts out her little finger for the queen to kiss: she puts a poisoned pin (*bior nimhe*) into it. This is taken out by the second wife as in our story. In Irish versions a sleep-pin (*biorán suain*) is put into the heroine's finger by the queen, or into the back of her head by a travelling pedlar employed by her. Evidently the Gaelic oecotype departed from the usual European pattern of the story where the heroine is poisoned when staying with the dwarfs or robbers, and later found in her coffin by the prince who revives her. The motif of the locked room (C 611) is more often associated with tales of the Bluebeard type (AT 311-12: e.g. Campbell 1890: II, 279-89) where there is a similar situation—dead woman revived and set free by sister.
- <sup>13</sup> The last episode has been borrowed from the variant of AT 706 along with the opening, of which it is the logical sequel—though apparently Macleod had heard a version with the one and without the other. In Macleod's printed version the end is very simple: the queen comes for the heroine with a poisoned drink in her hand, but the prince's second wife says that it is customary in that country for the giver to take a drink from the cup first, and as the queen puts the cup to her lips, she forces it down her throat. This seems less like the standard international ending, where the queen is exposed and punished, than our version, but the foiled attempt to poison the heroine with a cup is the normal end of Irish versions: usually the queen is accused and punished when a lapdog drinks the spilled liquid and dies. The second wife is always responsible for saving the heroine.

Two motifs have been combined here: the usual motif from AT 706 of the oath not to tell the story to a Christian soul, evaded by telling it to an unchristened child, and our motif of the impossible conditions (H 1053). This is usually associated in Gaelic with the story of *The Clever Peasant Girl* (AT 875) and also occurs in a version of the story of Diarmaid and Gràinne (Campbell 1892: III, 50). Other occurrences are discussed in Jackson 1961:108-9. Usually the animal ridden by the girl is a he-goat—the wild (literally "venomous") boar is a picturesque embroidery, and the triplication of the ride through the church is a typical folk method of postponing the denouement. This ending does not fit well with what comes before, however: there

is no explanation why the stepmother should go to visit the heroine and take her husband with her.

- <sup>14</sup> This was evidently the end of the version mentioned in Macleod's note: "the king relieves the prince of his second wife". In the printed story the prince keeps both wives for himself. In Ireland the second wife usually becomes the heroine's servant, and later her father's wife. The nonsense formula which ends the story was used by Mrs. MacMillan in another of her stories. It is an elaborate version of a common Scottish Gaelic tale-ending: cf. Campbell 1890: I, 317; MacDougall 1891:144.

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