

Traditional poets and songmakers: M

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M, D of Staffin (20th Century)

- (1) **D. M. (Stafainn).** 'An Ad'. *An Gaidheal*, 59 (1964), 29

An amusing account of a spectacular hat seen at a wedding.. Eight stanzas, beginning with 'An latha phòs an Dotair Og' in an *amhran / cumha* type metre.

- (2) **D. M. (Staphainn).** 'A Bhratach Shidh'. *Sruth* (23rd January 1969), p. 3

Celebrates the Fairy Flag of the MacLeods. There are seven stanzas, beginning with 'Ann an talla nan tùr', in an *amhran / cumha* type metre.

MAIRI MHOR NAN ORAN (1821 – 1898)

Màiri was born in March 1821 at Skeabost in the Isle of Skye, the daughter of John MacDonald, Iain Bàn, a crofter. When she was about eight the family, following an abortive attempt to emigrate to Canada, settled in Glasgow; returning to Skye some twelve years later.

Màiri left the island about 1844 and went to Inverness where she married Isaac MacPherson in 1847. After her husband's death in 1871 she earned her living as a nurse. It was during this period that she was accused of theft and imprisoned. She always protested her innocence and her bitterness at the injustice which she had suffered left a deep impression upon her. Indeed, she maintained that it first gave life to her poetry.

Upon her release from prison in 1872 she went to Glasgow, where she underwent formal training as a nurse before going on to become a district nurse in Greenock. During her time in the Lowlands she returned frequently to Skye and finally settled there for good in 1882. The Laird of Skeabost, Lachlan MacDonald, gave her a small house rent free. But she did not return to a quiet life, for during her time in the Lowlands she had become deeply involved in the Land Agitation movement and she continued to attend meetings in the islands and on the mainland. She also accompanied Charles Fraser Mackintosh on several trips on behalf of the movement.

She kept in frequent touch with Gaels in the Highlands and Lowlands, attending and singing at ceilidhs, even

taking part in the first Mod in 1892, though she did not win a prize. She died in Portree on the 8th November 1898.

Màiri Mhór nan Oran was the most prolific of the nineteenth century Gaelic poets. Her work may be divided as follows: (1) songs about her personal humiliation; (2) songs about Highland affairs, particularly the land agitation; (3) songs about Skye; (4) festive songs; (5) eulogies, elegies and official poetry.

There is a close affinity between her personal songs and those about conditions in the Highlands. Out of her own suffering came a fellow feeling for the sufferings of her countrymen, and indeed the two came together in 'Luchd na Beurla'. Her songs about the Highlands are very different from others of the time. Though they contain frequent poetic weaknesses, most of them show a strength of mind and understanding, not to mention feeling, which was rare in her day. She did not adopt the romantic style of Niall MacLeòid and his followers and her poetry has a realism lacking in that of her contemporaries.

In composing, Màiri used one of the oldest methods – she put new words to existing tunes and sometimes used existing words, particularly at the end of a line when seeking rhyme or *aicill*. All of her songs, with the exception of two, were composed upon Gaelic tunes. This sets her apart from Niall MacLeòid. However, many of the songs which she used were those popular in Lowland ceilidhs in the second half of the nineteenth century, and a goodly number of her models are to be found in *An t-Oranaiche* ([Mac-na-Ceardadh 1879](#)).

(The information for the above account is for the most part from Domhnall Eachann Meek's account of the life and work of Mary MacPherson, Màiri Mhór nan Oran, in his *Màiri Mhór nan Oran* (Glaschu: Gairm, 1977)

The late Colonel 'Jock' MacDonald of Viewfield, Portree knew Màiri as a small boy and recounts an amusing anecdote of their friendship in an interview with Aonghas MacNeacail published in *North* 7, 32 (March / April 1979), 30-31.

(1) 'Oran Cumha an Ibhich'

- i **Màiri nan Dàn.** *Scottish Highlander* (6th January 1887).
[Unseen]
- ii **Màiri nan Dàn.** 'Oran Cumha an Ibhich'.
Broadsheet [1887?].
[Unseen]
- iii **Màiri nan Dàn.** 'Oran Cumha 'n Ibhich'.
TGSI, 49 (1974-1976), 353-356.

Includes an English translation.

- iv **Màiri nan Dàn.** 'Oran Cumha 'n Ibhirich'. *SGS*, 16 (Winter 1990), 34-37, 48.

Includes an English translation and notes.

- v **Màiri Nic-a-Phearsain.** 'Oran Cumha an Ibhirich'. *Tuath is Tighearna: Tenants and Landlords*. Edited by Donald E. Meek. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1995, pp. 167-169.

This mock elegy is for the hated Sheriff Ivory, one of the most notorious figures of the Land Agitation period. It was composed upon the occasion of the mistaken report of the Sheriff's demise in a bog in Trotternish. It was originally published, under the pseudonym 'Màiri nan Dàn' in the *Scottish Highlander* of 6th January 1887 and in a broadsheet now in the MacKinnon Collection in Edinburgh University Library. It has been presented by Donald Meek in his 'Gaelic Poets of the Land Agitation' (*TGSI*, 49:309-376) and 'The Role of Song in the Highland Land Agitation' (*SGS*, 16:1-53).

There are seven six-line stanzas, beginning with 'Chuala mi sgeul'.

- (2) **Màiri Nighean Iain Bhàin.** *Còmhradh nan Oran: Torr-a-Bheathain agus Creag Phàdruig*. Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair, 1887. 16p.

This poem is reprinted on pp. 200-210 of Màiri's 1891 collection.

- (3) **Màiri Nic a' Phearsain (Màiri Nighean Iain Bhàin).** *Dàin agus Orain Ghàidhlig*. Agus Cunntas Ghoirid air a' Beatha le Alastair Mac-Bheathain. Inbhirnis: A. agus U. Mac-Coinnich, 1891. xiv, 320d, dealbhan.

All ninety poems in this collection, between eight and nine thousand lines, were taken down from Màiri's dictation by John Whyte. Lachlan MacDonald of Skeabost bore the entire cost of the printing and binding of the book. The cost of illustration was defrayed by William Fraser of Pahang and some unnamed friends met the cost of having the poems taken down from Màiri's recitation. There are five portraits in all, showing the poetess in a studio setting as if engaged in various stages of the spinning and weaving process.

- (4) **Domhnall Eachann Meek (fear-deas.).** *Màiri Mhór nan Oran*. Taghadh d'a h-òrain le eachdraidh a beatha is notaichean. Glaschu: Gairm, 1977. 146d., map, dealbhan.

Thirty-two of Màiri's songs are included here. In his introduction the editor explains that when making his selection he has tried to measure the literary and historical value of each song and to choose the best of them. He concedes that in the final analysis the choice is a personal one and that someone else might make a very different selection.

The account of Màiri's life and work on pp. 13-29 is an invaluable one. The songs are followed by notes and a list of the tunes upon which the songs are composed. There is an alphabetical list of all of Màiri's published songs and poems not included in this selection. Finally there is a personal names index. The entire work is in Gaelic.

Dr. John MacInnes has reviewed this book (*Gairm*, 102:188-191).

- (5) **Domhnall Eachann Meek** (fear-deas.). *Màiri Mhór nan Oran: Taghadh de a h-Orain*. 2nd. Edition. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press for Comann Litreachas Gàidhlig na h-Alba, 1998. 240 dd.

[Unseen}. Includes eight poems not in the first edition (Meek 1977). Reviewed by Iain MacLeòid in *Gairm* (187:282-283)

- (6) **Calum MacLeòid**. 'Màiri Mhór agus an Ceannaiche'. *Gairm*, 114 (An t-Earrach 1981), 122-123.

Tells of an encounter between Màiri Mhór and the Portree shopkeeper Donald Stewart in which he had the worst of it. Includes four lines which Màiri is said to have composed upon the occasion.

- (7) **Màiri Nic a' Phearsain**. 'Nuair Bha Mi Og'. 'Brosnachadh nan Gaidheal'. *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*. Edited by Catherine Kerrigan. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991. pp. 88-95, 342-3.

With English translations by Meg Bateman.

Tunes:

A number of Màiri Mhór's songs with music in staff notation are in *Orain an Eilein* ([Mhàrtainn 2001](#):28-31) They are: 'Nuair bha mi òg', 'Oran Beinn Lì', 'Eilean a' Cheò', 'Soraidh leis an àit'.

MAIRI NAN DAN. See MAIRI MHOR NAN ORAN

MAIRI NIGHEAN ALASDAIR RUAIDH (c. 1615 – c. 1705)

According to tradition Harris was Màiri's birthplace and she is also said to have been buried there ([MacKenzie 1872](#): 20-21); ([Watson 1934](#): xiv-xix). Furthermore, John MacInnes has presented linguistic evidence which suggests that Harris was the source of her dialect ([MacInnes 1966](#): 6-7). However, her traditional association with Dunvegan and Skye is such that she is usually regarded as a Skye poetess and the genealogist Alick Morrison insists that Skye was her birthplace ([MacKinnon and Morrison 1970](#): 201).

In his account of Màiri's life, John MacKenzie states that she was born in Rodel, Harris in 1569, the daughter of Alexander MacLeod, descendant of a chief of the Clan MacLeod. He further states that she did not start composing poetry until late in life when employed as a nurse in the chief's household at Dunvegan (op. cit., 20-21). One of her songs displeased the chief, who banished her to Mull where she composed 'Luinneag MhicLeòid' ([Watson 1934](#):36-43). She was eventually recalled on condition that she made no more songs. However, she continued to compose, excusing herself by saying that it was not a song, only a *crònan*.

J. C. Watson believes that the date of Màiri's birth is more likely to have been c. 1615 and that of her death 1705 or afterwards (op. cit., xiii-xiv, 88-95). This would have made her an almost exact contemporary of the great Lochaber poet, Iain Lom. There seems to be little doubt that she was related to the family of the MacLeod chieftains. The Rev. William Matheson discusses her genealogy and states that her ancestor was Alasdair Ruadh mac Thormoid mhic Uilleim, great-grandson of the fifth chief of MacLeod. He also states that, according to Uist tradition, her mother was a kinswoman of the MacDonalds of Clanranald (*TGSI*, 41:11-16).

There have been many theories concerning Màiri's banishment: about what caused it and where it was spent. These theories have been discussed by John MacInnes (op. cit., 7-10). He himself believes that she may have been banished because the content of her songs celebrated the traditional Gaelic social order at a time of social upheaval. As to the place of her exile, J. C. Watson believes that she made a *cuairt* to Scarba, Pabbay and Mull (op. cit., xvii).

Màiri's poetry belongs to the period of transition from classical Gaelic poetry, with its syllabic metres and classical language, to modern Gaelic poetry, with its stressed metres and vernacular language. In discussing this, J. C. Watson contradicts the commonly held view that she had been the originator of the modern style. He makes the point that one cannot fix any one poet as the founder of the modern school, for the classic and modern periods overlap and popular poetry in stressed metres

was being composed long before the date of Màiri's earliest ascribed poem (op. cit., xix-xxi). Derick Thomson discusses the popularly held assumptions concerning the metres used by herself and her near contemporary Iain Lom. Professor Thomson writes that the so-called strophic metres, at one time believed to have been invented by these two poets, were in existence before they were born ([Thomson 1977](#):132).

In the course of his article, 'The Gaelic Songs of Mary MacLeod', John MacInnes dwells at length upon Màiri's distinctive verse-forms and concludes by broaching the possibility that they may have had their origins in the old native Gaelic rhythmical verse ([MacInnes 1966](#):22-23). In the course of the same article Dr. MacInnes suggests (pp. 12-13) that the vernacular praise poetry of Màiri and Iain Lom is not only of a type which was well represented in Scottish Gaelic poetry from their time onwards, but which had existed before their time alongside the classical praise poetry.

In 'Metaphor and Metonymy in the Poetry of Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh', Máiri Ní Annracháin examines the use of figurative language in Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh's poetry ([Ni Annracháin 2007](#)). Dr. Ní Annracháin maintains that Màiri's work displays her facility with metonymy, while her metaphors are "relatively unremarkable" (p. 171).

It is interesting to consider two somewhat contrasting critical views of the work of Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh. Derick Thomson, while acknowledging that her poetry does have certain poetic virtues considers her reputation to be greatly inflated ([Thomson 1977](#):135). Her editor, J. C. Watson takes a different view of her work, writing that it should be approached with the ear and the heart and not judged from an intellectual perspective ([Watson 1934](#): xxvii).

Texts:

- (1) **J. Carmichael Watson** (editor). *Orain agus Luinneagan Gàidhlig le Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh: Gaelic Songs of Mary MacLeod*. London and Glasgow: Blackie and Son, 1934. xxxiv, 158p, plate.
Reprinted Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1965. xxxiv, 158p.

This work was compiled while J. C. Watson was still a student at Edinburgh University and is, as John MacInnes has written upon its reprint in 1965, a remarkable achievement for such a young person ([MacInnes 1966](#): 3). Dr. MacInnes does point out though, that an enlarged edition rather than a reprint would have been preferable. Studies of Màiri's poetry since the book's first publication in 1934 have revealed the necessity for considerable

revision, as well as enlargement, in any future edition of her work. The material listed below may be regarded as being in part a supplement, and in part a guide, to Watson's work. None of the poems discussed appear in Watson's edition unless stated otherwise.

- (2) **J. L. Campbell.** 'Notes on the Poems Ascribed to Mary MacLeod in D. C. MacPherson's *Duanaire*. SGS, 11, Part 2 (September 1968), 171-191.

Discusses four songs published in Watson's edition: 'Pòsadh Mhic Leòid' (pp. 2-11), 'Mairearad nan Cuireid' (pp. 12-15), 'Tuireadh' (pp. 32-35) and 'An t-Eudach' (pp. 50-53). They are all of the waulking song type and first appeared in print in MacPherson's work ([MacPherson 1868](#):140-145, 138-140, 134-136, 136-138). Dr. Campbell concludes his discussion by stating that he believes that the first-named poem should be omitted entirely from any future edition of Màiri's works and that, the authorship of the other three being uncertain, they would be better placed in an appendix.

- (3) **Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and Kenneth MacLeod.** *Songs of the Hebrides*.

There are five songs in this series whose texts are claimed to be derived in varying degrees from Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh compositions. I would not place too great a reliance on these texts, which are:

'Ruairidh Og', ([Kennedy-Fraser and MacLeod 1917](#):185-189)
'Long a' Leumaich', (" " "
[1925](#):36-39)
'Long MhicLeòid', (" " "
" 1925:41-45)
'Cuirm-Mara', (" " "
" 1925:46-49)
'Rìgh Manainn', (" " "
" 1925:50-54)

- (4) **John MacInnes.** 'Gaelic Songs of Mary Macleod. SGS, 11, Part 1 (December 1966), 3-25.

An important reassessment of Watson's edition of the works of Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh, as well as a discussion of various traditions concerning her and an examination of the poetry itself.

- (5) **William Matheson.** 'Notes on Mary MacLeod: (1) Her Family Connexions; (2) Her Forgotten Songs'. *TGS*, 41 (1951-1952), 11-25.

Rev. Matheson discusses three songs which he believes should be considered for inclusion in

any future edition of Màiri 's work and which are not included in Watson's edition:

- i 'Oran roinneadh do dh'Eachonn M'Illeoin Triath Dubhart a mharbhadh ann Inmherceatain' was published in the *Eigg Collection* ([MacDomhnuill 1776](#): 232-234) without any ascription, but Rev. Matheson believes that Màiri may well have been the author.
- ii 'An Cronan Muileach'. Rev. Matheson believes the subject of this poem to be the same as that of the previous poem, Sir Hector MacLean. He believes that Màiri may well have been the author, although none of the three instances of publication which he cites carry an ascription ([Gillies 1786](#):33-34; [Campbell 1818](#):61; [Sinclair 1928](#):189-190).
- iii 'Siùthadaibh, siùthadaibh a mhnàthan' is, as Rev. Matheson points out, ascribed to Màiri by Frances Tolmie ([Tolmie 1911](#):216-217), although it is not ascribed to her in another version (*Celtic Monthly*, 16:140). Subsequent to the publication of Rev. Matheson's article a further version of the song was published with an ascription to Màiri ([Campbell and Collinson 1969](#): 94-96, 286-290). Frances Tolmie's version is reproduced in *Orain an Eilein*, entitled 'Air fàir an là' with a tentative ascription to Màiri ([Mhàrtainn 2001](#):10)

In addition to these three songs, Rev. Matheson quotes a single eight-line stanza beginning 'Cha dioc fhad 's a tha mi 'g éisdeachd', said to have been composed by Màiri when she became irritated by her mother's extolling the virtues of her own MacDonald clan. It is also published in *Carmina Gadelica*, Vol. 6 ([Matheson 1971](#):35-36).

A four-line stanza, beginning 'Nan robh thu ghaoil an Cill Mhoire' is quoted. Màiri is said to have composed it upon the occasion of her sister's funeral in Benbecula. I have found two other versions in print ([Domhnallach 1968](#): 183-185; *Carmina Gadelica*, 5:341). The metre bears a resemblance to the old Gaelic rhythmical verse discussed by Dr. John MacInnes as a source of Màiri's verse forms ([MacInnes 1966](#):22-23).

Finally, Rev. Matheson discusses a song of Màiri's first mentioned by John [MacKenzie \(1872](#):21) which ends with an address to 'Tormod nan Tri Tormod' and whose words have now been lost. He believes that the song's opening line is 'Tha mo chion air an ùr ghibht' and that its metre is the same as that of Donnchadh Bàn's 'Cumha Coire a' Cheathaich'.

(6) 'Do Mhac Dhomhnaill'

- i *Orain nuadh Ghaedhlach*. Iain Mac Illeain. Duneudainn, 1818, pp.233-236.
- ii *Mac-Talla* (7th September 1900), p. 80.
- iii *Mactalla nan Tur*. Edited by the Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair. Sydney, C.B: Mac-Talla, 1901, pp. 42-44.
- iv *Story and Song from Loch Ness-side*. Alexander MacDonald. Inverness: Northern Counties, 1914, pp. 288-289.
- v *TGSI*, 27 (1908-1911), 370-373.

The first version is ascribed to Màiri in *Orain Nuadh Ghaedhlach*. It has fifteen verses, beginning with 'Tha tasgaidh bhù' am an diomhaireachd'. It is taken directly from [John MacLean's own manuscript collection](#) and was unknown to J. C. Watson. The second and third versions are probably derived from the same source as the first version.

The fifth version is from the Rev. George Henderson's 'Làmh-sgrìobhainnean Mhic-Neacail', (*TGSI*, 27:340-409). Of some ninety-three lines, beginning with 'Tha ulaidh orm an uamharrachd', it is the text which J. C. Watson uses in his edition ([Watson 1934](#):76-81). In his notes on pp. 132-137 Watson also gives the fourth version listed here. It has just twenty-eight lines, beginning with 'Thoir tasgaidh bhuan 'an diomhaireachd' and is from Glenmoriston.

(7) 'An t-Eudach' (Watson 1934:50-52)

This version, without the vocables and with a parallel English translation by Meg Bateman, is in *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets* ([Kerrigan 1991](#):18-23, 336).

(8) 'Fuigheall' (Watson 1934:72-75)

This has forty-eight lines and has been edited from the MacLagan MS and the *Sàr-Obair* versions. The Rev. William Matheson has edited a much longer (eighty-four lines) version entitled 'Theid mi 'e m' dheòin' from the Dornie MS and the *Sàr-Obair* versions.

(9) 'Hilliù-an, hilleò-an'. *Tocher*, 27 (Winter 1977-78), 150-151.

A *port-a-beul*, said to have been composed by Màiri upon the threshold of a house when she had been forbidden to compose a song either inside or outside the house.

- (10) **'M' iteagan is m' eòin is m' uighean'**. *Folksongs and Folklore of South Uist*. Second edition. Margaret Fay Shaw. Oxford: OUP, 1977, pp. 188-189.

Another *port-a-beul*, bearing a considerable resemblance to the previous item and with a similar story of its composition. However, I think that there are sufficient textual differences between the two for them to be regarded as two different songs, rather than two versions of the same song.

- (11) **'Oran do Ruairidh Mac Leòid 'sna Hearradh'**. *Comhchruinneachadh Ghlinn-a'-Bhàird*. Edited by the Rev. A. MacLean Sinclair. Charlottetown: Haszard and Moore, 1890, pp. 268-269.

A poem of seven stanzas in a strophic metre, beginning 'Tha mo ghaol ann sna Hearradh'. I have been unable to trace any other instance of the poem in print or to identify the Ruairidh to whom it is addressed. It is ascribed to Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh: an ascription which would one would need to treat with caution.

- (12) **'An Talla am bu Ghnàth le Mac Leòid'** (Watson 1934:20-25).

Watson's edition is based upon that in the *Eigg Collection*. His version, with a parallel English translation by Meg Bateman, is in *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets* ([Kerrigan 1991](#):62-65, 340). An edition based upon the MacLagan MS version and entitled 'Do MhacLeòid' is in *Gàir nan Clàrsach* ([Ó Baoill 1994](#):134-138, 227).

Tunes:

J. C. Watson makes the valid point that Màiri's songs were made to be sung, not printed ([Watson 1934](#):xxvii,) although he does not give any information concerning the tunes. Francis Collinson quotes the Rev. Kenneth Macleod as having said that the tunes of Màiri's songs were composed by another woman ([Collinson 1966](#):54-55). He also notes information which J. L. Campbell obtained from the notebooks of Fr. Allan MacDonald of Eriskay concerning a tradition that the poetess was actually named Fionnaghal and had always been accompanied by another woman, Màiri dhubh nan òran, who sang her songs for her and committed them to memory (op. cit.). A similar tradition is recounted by Kate MacDonald, Bean Eairdsidh Raghail, to the effect that the tunes of Màiri's songs were composed by a woman, 'an Nigh'n Dubh' (*Tocher*, 27:150). Francis Collinson comments that the airs for

Màiri's songs were striking tunes, whoever had composed them ([Collinson 1966](#):55).

The following is a selection of printed sources for the tunes of some of the songs in J. C. Watson's edition of the works of Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh. The title of each song is followed in the first instance by the relevant page numbers in Watson's edition.

- i 'An Talla am bu ghnàth le Mac Leòid', pp. 20-25 ([Fraser 1816](#):23; [Campbell 1816](#):60; [MacDonald 1895](#):33-34, 42, App., 21; [Kennedy-Fraser and MacLeod 1921](#):31-33; [Mhàrtainn 2001](#):8)
- ii 'Luinneag Mhic Leòid', pp. 36-43 ([Campbell 1816](#):13; *Celtic Monthly*, 13:153; *An Deò-Gréine*, 2:8; [Dun 1848](#):345; [MacDonald 1895](#):25; [Mhàrtainn 2001](#):9)
- iii 'Crònán an Taibh', pp. 44-49 ([MacDonald 1895](#):16; [Tolmie 1911](#):263-264)
- iv 'An Crònán', pp. 60-71 ([Inverness n.d.](#):59; [Fraser 1816](#):71; [MacDonald 1895](#):App., 12)
- v 'Do Mhac Dhomhnaill', pp. 76-81 ([MacDonald 1982](#):437)
- vi 'Luinneag', pp. 82-87 ([MacDonald 1784](#):15; [MacDonald 1895](#):25-26; *Celtic Monthly*, 14:60)
- vii 'Cumha do Shir Tormod Mac Leòid', pp. 96-99 ([MacDonald 1895](#):App., 53; [Tolmie 1911](#):198-199)

AM MAOR BEAG

Of Kilmoluag. Said to be responsible for the Skye version of 'Tha mo bhreacan-sa fo 'n dìle'. For details, see entry for 'The mo bhreacan fliuch fo 'n dìle' in the section Anonymous Poetry and Song: [Individual Items P-Z](#).

MHARTAINN, Cairistiona

Caisistiona Mhàrtainn. *Gaelic Songs of Skye.*
Taigh na Teud: An t-Eilian Sgitheanach, 2002.
132dd.

A collection of 156 songs with both words and music. See entry in section Traditional Poetry and Song: [Collectors & Collections](#).

MARTAINN, Fearchar

'Fàgail Mhalaig'. *Gairm*, 102 (An t-Earrach 1978), 162-163.

A typical exile song. Six four-line verses and a refrain, beginning 'An téid thu leam, a ribhinn mhaisich'. Composed upon the model of Alasdair Nicolson's 'Eilean Leòdhais, Tìr nan Gaisgeach' (*MacLaren's Hebrides Collection of Scottish Songs*; No. 27).

MARTAINN, Iain (Early 20th Century)

This poet seemed to belong to Lyndale in Skye.

- (1) **Iain Màrtainn**. 'Cuairt do Liandail'. *Guth na Bliadhna*, 17 (1920), 23-25.

A poem celebrating an exile's return to Lyndale. It is very reminiscent of eighteenth century nature poetry. In the last stanza the poet turns from praise of nature to praise of a man, 'An Domhnullach fialaidh, Torr-Mór', noted for his charity and care for the needy. This is probably the Donald MacDonald, known as 'Tormore', referred to by A.R. Forbes in his *Place-names of Skye* ([Forbes 1923](#):260) and who died about 1922.

There are nine eight-line stanzas, beginning with 'Se deireadh an earraich so dh' ùraich 'nam aire'. The metre is similar to that of Donnchadh Bàn's 'Cumha Coire a' Cheathaich'.

- (2) **Iain Màrtainn**. 'Madainn Earraich'. *Guth na Bliadhna*, 17 (1920), 95-97.

A celebration of spring and new life. There are eight eight-line stanzas beginning 'Tha m' aigne air dùsgadh'. The metre is similar to that of Iain Dubh Mac Iain 'ic Ailein's 'Oran nam Fineachan Gaidhealach'.

- (3) **Iain Màrtainn**. 'Fàilte an t-Samhraidh'. *Guth na Bliadhna*, 17 (1920), 212-213.

An exile poem, with the same emphasis on nature to be found in his other poems. There is a reference in the third stanza to the succession of the heir to an estate, perhaps the Lyndale estate?

There are six eight-line stanzas beginning with 'Ceud fàilte d' n t-samhradh, tha dlùthachadh teann oirnn'. The metre is similar to Donnchadh Bàn's 'Cumha Coire a' Cheathaich'.

MARTIN, Angus. See [AONGHAS NA GAOITHE](#)

MARTIN, Farquhar. See MARTAINN, Fearchar

MARTIN, John. See MARTAINN, Iain

MATHESON, Angus. See [MACMHATHAIN, Aonghas](#)

MATHESON, Charles. See [MACMHATHAIN, Tearlach](#)

MATHESON, Jessie. See [NICMHATHAIN, Seonaid](#)

MONTGOMERY, Catriona. See: [The New Poetry](#)

MONTGOMERY, Morag. See: [The New Poetry](#)

MORAI DH, Iain Og (19th Century)

The son of a Skye laird, Iain Og Moraidh as a young man spent some time as a civil servant in London, but after falling into debt he had to return to Skye where his fiddle playing and his tales of life in London made him a popular guest in various houses. Eventually some friends got him the position of parish schoolmaster in Eigg, where he spent most of the rest of his life. His unorthodox teaching methods made him unpopular with his employers, but he was much loved by his pupils.

(For information on the life of Iain Og Moraidh see: *The Road to the Isles* ([MacLeod 1927](#):76-77; *Sgrìobhaidhean Choinnich MhicLeòid* ([MacLeod 1988](#): 70-74); 'Iain Og Moraidh and his Song: a Nineteenth Century Enigma' ([Loughran 2006](#)).

- (1) '**Aodann Corrabheinn**'. *Songs of the Hebrides*. Edited by Marjory Kennedy-Fraser and Kenneth MacLeod. Vol. 2. London: Boosey and Co., 1917, pp. 205-211.

Song contributed by Kenneth MacLeod. According to his notes it would appear to be his reworking of a song which he attributes to Iain Og and which in its turn is said to be a reworking of an ancient 'supernatural' composition about the martyrdom of St. Donnan. 'Aodann Corrabheinn' has a thrice repeated refrain beginning with 'Tha 'n crodh-laoigh air aodainn Corrabheinn', with a four-line and an eight-line verse. The music is in staff notation.

- (2) '**An gaol a thug mi òg**'. *Clàrsach an Doire*. Niall MacLeòid. 6th ed. Glaschu: Gairm, 1975, pp. 20-21.

This song first appeared in the second edition of *Clàrsach an Doire* (1892). It is Niall MacLeòid's own composition, but he notes that he composed it upon the model of a song of the same name, composed many years before by Iain Og Moraidh.

(3) 'Oran Iain Oig'

- i **Iain Og Murray**. 'Moch 's a' Mhadainn'. *The Highlander* (6th October 1877), p. 3.
- ii '**Oran Leannan Sìthe**'. *An Gaidheal*, 39 (1943-1944), 143.
- iii '**Do Iain Og**'. *Gaelic Songs in Nova Scotia*. Edited by Helen Creighton and Calum MacLeod. Ottawa: Dept. of the Secretary of State, 1964, pp. 122-123.
- iv '**Oran na Bean Shìth**'. *From the Farthest Hebrides*. Edited by Donald A. Fergusson. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978, pp. 140-143.
- v **Anne Loughran**. 'Iain Og Moraidh and his Song: a Nineteenth Century Enigma', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, Vol. 22 (2006), 161-186.

Strange and enigmatic: this is unusual, if not unique, in Scottish Gaelic song. It is sometimes described as a fairy song and sometimes as a song to autumn. In it the poet encounters a *gruagach* who takes him on a journey through the sights and sounds of autumn before leaving him exhausted at the song's end.

The last item quoted is an article which discusses Iain Og Moraidh's life and the nature of his song. The appendix includes the first and second versions of the song listed above as well as four previously unpublished versions, including one from the notebook of Kenneth MacLeod.

MORISON, Iain. See MORRISON, Eoin

MORISON, Roderick. See [AN CLARSAIR DALL](#)

MORRAGH, Iain Og. See MORRIDH, Iain Og

MORRISON, Eoin (Early 19th Century)

- (1) **Eoin Morrison**. *Dàin Spioradail*. Le Eoin Morrison o 'n Eilein Sgiathanach. Glasgow: Maurice Ogle, 1828, 32p.

In his entry for this book in *Bibliotheca Scoto-Celtica*, John Reid writes ([Reid 1832](#):96):

“The above was the production of a blind man, they were copied from his mouth by a Schoolmaster in the Highlands, and sent to Glasgow under the auspices of the Rev. D. Ranken, South Knapdale; and the Rev. Dr. MacLeod of Campsie, but the printer declaring that MS unreadable, it was given to Mr. Lachlan MacLean, who recopied it, and obtained the author’s consent to write three Hymns himself; viz., the first two and the last.”

There are thirteen of Eoin Morrison’s poems here, and their predominant theme is personal unworthiness and the need for repentance. There are frequent references to biblical themes and stories.

Although Eoin Morrison never approaches Dùghall Bochanan’s greatness as a poet, Bochanan’s influence is to be detected in his work. As far as style is concerned, there is a tendency to ramble, particularly in the longer poems. But this is not invariably the case. In one poem, ‘A chodaltaich nach dean thu eiridh’ (pp. 28-29) he develops his theme by addressing in turn a variety of disabled people, this imposing an effective unity on the poem. His tone tends to be quiet and muted, but his treatment of the theme of the Day of Judgement in ‘N uair a thig latha na curtach’ (pp. 29-31) has for him, unusual vigour.

Most of his poems are in quatrain form, with end rhyme between the second and fourth lines, and *aicill*. There are also three poems in strophic metres and one in a *cumha* metre. Without tunes it is frequently difficult to establish a clear stress pattern and with some poems there is a temptation to regard them as being syllabic; ‘Uair a bha mise leam fein’ (pp. 9-11 being a case in point.

- (2) **Iain Morison.** *Dana Spioradail no Teagasg Fallan o ‘n Scriobtuir.* 2nd edition. Edinburgh: Printed by R. Marshall for the support of the Author, 1832, 32p.

I have not had sight of this book. The above citation is from *Typographia Scoto-Gadelica* ([MacLean 1915](#):290-291). This also cites a quotation from the introduction to the book and judging from it Eoin Morison appears to have been non-literate and to have had a very difficult life. His latter years were spent in Knapdale where he was a regular churchgoer.

MORRISON, John. See MORISON, Eoin

MURCHISON, T. M. See [MACCALMAIN](#), Tomas

MURRAY, John. See MOROIDH, Iain Og

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[Traditional: known authorship](#)

[A-C](#) [D-Domhnall](#) [Domhnallach-Dz](#) [E-G](#) [H-L](#)
[M-MacA](#) [MacB-MacC](#) [MacD](#) [MacE-MacK](#),
[MacLa-MacLeod](#) [MacLeòid A-H](#) [MacLeòid I-Z](#)
[MacM-MacN](#) [MacO-MacZ](#) [M](#) [N](#) [O-Q](#) [R-Z](#)

[Traditional: anonymous](#)

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[Traditional: collections](#)

[Annie Arnott](#) [An Cabairneach](#) [Carmina Gadelica](#)
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