Irish Review (Dublin)

An Cóill / The Wood

Author(s): Pádraic Mac Piarais and P. H. Pearse

Source: *The Irish Review (Dublin)*, Vol. 4, No. 41 (Jul. - Aug., 1914), pp. 248-255

Published by: [Irish Review \(Dublin\)](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30063316>

Accessed: 14/06/2014 16:16

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AN COILL.

PÁDRAIC MAC PIARAIS

DO RSGRÍOB.

I.

CLÁIRSEAC NA COILLE.

TÁ COILL i n-iarctar Connac̃t dá n-geirtear an Coill mhór. Ainm eile atá uirthi, an tSean-Coill. Ní gan fáct do shármeadh an t-ainm riñn si, óir ír í an Coill ír rine i n-éirinn í. Níl ní i scríobáib fáil, agus beo agus marb̃ o'áiream̃, ír rine ioná an Coill riñn ac̃t cloca glara na gcnoc agus ornaõ éagsaointeac̃ na rean-mhara. Má tá meabair agus cuim̃ne as Deannaib̃ Deola ír ar éisín ír cuim̃in leo raos̃al nac̃ raib̃ an Coill riñn ann. Do bí rí ann rui fuaire na Deanna a n-ainm féin. Do bí rí ann, ina fíodbair̃ fíor-ómh̃in fíor-óiam̃hair, nuair do shab̃ Deola conair Connac̃t anoir as tshuim̃ do le rí a báir. Má bí ainm ar bit̃ as Deola uirthi, ní dóic̃ige ainm do beit̃ aise uirthi ioná an tSean-Coill.

Do bí trác̃ ann agus ní raib̃ na Deanna féin ann. Do bí Deann Dán ina macaire, do bí Deann Corr ina clár coit̃om̃ com̃-réir, agus doob' féoir̃ gur̃b' ina gleann do Dubh-Óruaice; nó doob' féoir̃ gur̃ shinned̃il agus sear-shaineam̃ do bí i n-áit na mDeann n-áluinn agus ornaõ éagsaointeac̃ na mara go fíorraib̃e or a gcionn. "Árduig̃tear na Deanna," ar Ceap̃o an Dom̃ain, agus ar an bfoal riñn do bhrúct̃ teinñte ó bhuinn na talman agus do háruig̃ead̃ cloig̃eann ceann-shar̃b na Dubh-Óruaice, agus maol-éilac̃án áit na gCaorac̃, agus moct̃ar mór-áb̃bal na mDeann mbuan, leit ar leit. Ba lom iad na leac̃raca liata i tóir̃ aim̃r̃ie agus ba shar̃b sháib̃teac̃ suailne na gcnoc, ac̃t níorb' fáda gur̃ clúuig̃ead̃ a plearrac̃a le brac̃ fíodbair̃e na forais̃ire fionnfuaire. Cao ar ar shuair̃ead̃ar, a fíol̃ta bunuoir̃ na Sean-Coille, nó ca raon nó conair do shab̃ad lib? An iad éanlaic̃ an aeri o'iom̃cuir̃ ina mbionnaib̃ ríob, nó an iad na gaõta glórac̃a sháireac̃a do rshair̃ annro ríob le n-a lám̃aib̃ do-feic̃reana? Cía ceap̃ oib̃ an fárac̃ ro mar̃ ionã coinne agus com̃óala? Mo cion do'n Té riñn, agus mo cion oib̃-re, a fíol̃ta ór fáir̃ an Coill do éap̃ar!

Anoir agus aniar agus doct̃uair̃ agus anoeap̃, ó shac̃ áir̃o ar a réireann gaõt, ar shac̃ raon aer̃oia dá leanann éan, táng̃aor̃ as preasair̃ na coinne: ríol uarac̃, ríol beite, ríol iubair̃, ríol rail̃ige, ríol caor̃cainn,

THE WOOD

TRANSLATED FROM THE IRISH OF P. H. PEARSE

I

THE HARP OF THE WOOD

THERE is a Wood in the west of Connacht that is called the Great Wood. Another name that it has is the Old Wood. And not without cause has that name been given to it, for it is the oldest Wood in Ireland. Of living things or of dead things, there is nothing in the land of Fál older than that Wood except the grey stones of the hills and the lamentable sigh of the old sea. If the Bens of Beola have mind and memory they can scarcely remember an age when that Wood was not. It was there before the Bens received their own name. It was there, a deep and mysterious forest, when Beola took the westward Connacht way as he drew towards the sod of his death. If Beola had any name for it, it is not likely that he called it by any other name than that name of the Old Wood.

There was a time when the Bens themselves were not. Beann Bhán was a plain, Beann Chorr was a smooth and level lowland, Dubh-Chruach was perchance a glen; or it may be that in the place of the glorious Bens were gravel and white sea-sand, with the lamentable sigh of the sea for ever above them. "Let the Bens be lifted up," said the Artisan of the World, and at that word fires broke from the womb of the earth, and one by one they reared the rugged head of Dubh-Chruach, and the naked side of Alt na gCaorach, and the majestic awful bulk of the lasting Bens. Bare were the grey flagstones in the beginning of time and rough and fearsome were the shoulders of the hills, but it was not long until their flanks were clad with the woodland mantle of the cool forest. Whence did ye come, O primal seeds of the Old Wood? What path or way did ye take? Did the fowl of the air carry you hither in their breasts, or did the vociferous laughing winds scatter you here with invisible hands? Who appointed unto you this wilderness for your place of meeting and trysting? I hail that Being, and I hail you, O seeds from which sprang the Wood that I have loved!

From east and west and north and south, from every airt from which a wind blows, by every aerial path that bird follows, they came answering their tryst: seed of the oak, seed of the birch, seed

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riol cuilinn, riol an gúir gairb Sáothalais. Agus o'fár gac riol oíob ina éirinn, agus do sein gac éirinn de réir a cinéil, gur éirig na homnai ur-áirí an-éirí agus na beite breagha breac-folurmaria agus gur foirbíg cruaid-éirí agus gúir Sáothalac agus gac éirinn de éirinnais na Coille de réir a aimríe. Da éirí annrí : n-uairí an fáirí ceol ur-nuad as freagairí éirí-éirí na fáirí, .i. Cláirí na Coille as éirínn go fóirí-éirí fóirí-éirí an mbairí a éirí do éirínn do-éirínn na gairí.

Da clor an ceol rin ar fuo na d'fheiribh d'á fuagairt v'il-cinnibhéalach an aoir agus na talman go raib port v'ioin agus ápur comhairte v'ioib fá ríad v'uilleadair na hóg-Coille. D'fheasraodar an comhairm. Táinig an bproic liat agus an vobair-cú v'onn v'io-géal, an rionnac ruad agus an faol-cú riabac, an cat c'rainn agus an m'adac c'rainn agus an c'iaia beas ruad, an fia v'ad agus an fearbós, an g'irp'ia v'ad agus an earó agus an g'raimeos v'eilgneac, an c'ean-luc v'ub agus an luicín liat, maille le gac áit v'f'aitis fia v'adin v'á g'carann coill; táinig an corp mór agus v'fuagairt cois v'ar c'eadair na Coille gur umluigeadar v'ó agus gur g'airmeadar v'í v'e; táinig ealta éagrála ionganacá éan, agus v'ronga v'o-áirimighe piart, agus r'gaotha lionmáia beac agus reangán agus ciarós agus cuileos, ionnur nac raib i v'v'eiréad áirp'ie poll ná cuar ná uacair, port ábann ná b'ruac loca, tonn uirge ná tulac talman, crann ná v'or ná tom, gar ná v'uille ná caol-ríbe f'oir ar fuo na Coille nac raib ina v'ún-baile agus ina v'aingean-port v'áit v'áit v'áit v'áit na Coille.

Do gluaisir aimpirí méian. Do cuip éire a céad maol uí. D'fán an tSean-Cóill ina Coill. Do gluaisir aimpirí eile, aimpirí an-éada. Do cuip éire a dara maol uí. D'fán an tSean-Cóill ina Coill. Do gluaisir an tpeaf ruim aimpirí. Lá dá dtáinig do cluineadh fuaim ur-nuadh uachtair na gCoill. Buillí comairte tróma tuaisge. Do cluineadh na buillí rin ar feadh na mbliadhanta. Do gearradh a lán d'adhmaid na Sean-Cóille. Do fágaí lom airí gualtine na mbeann agus cúim na ngleann. Áit níor gearradh na crainn ar fáil. D'fán Dub-Óruac ina Coill. Tá éire agus cur a tpeaf maol uí, áit tá an méirí rin de'n tSean-Cóill ina Coill i gcomhairle. Dub-Óruac agus an gleann atá fúití agus imeall-buipí an locha atá i lár an gleanna: tá an méirí rin ina Coill fóir agus beirí ina Coill go lá an luain. Góir beas i ndíu, tá an tSean-Cóill ann i nveirí na raogal, i

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of the yew, seed of the sally, seed of the rowan, seed of the holly, seed of the rugged Irish larch. And each seed of them grew into a tree, and each tree produced after its kind, until there rose the towering ponderous oaks and the lovely dappled-lightsome birches, and until hard holly and Irish larch waxed strong, and every tree of the trees of the wood according to its season. Then was heard in the loneliness of the desert a new music answering the ancient music of the sea, to wit, the Harp of the Wood playing very sweetly, very sadly, whenever its strings were plucked by the invisible fingers of the wind.

That music was heard throughout the wilds proclaiming to the many tribes of the air and the earth that there was a haven of refuge and a dwellingplace for them in the shade of the foliage of the young Wood. They answered the summons. The grey badger came and the brown white-toothed otter, the red fox and the grizzled wolf, the tree cat and the pine marten and the little red squirrel, the russet deer and the roebuck, the hare and the stoat and the spiny hedgehog, the old black rat and the little grey mouse, and every furtive timid thing that loves the woodland; the great boar came and declared war upon the clans of the Wood until they did homage to him and called him king; there came various and wonderful flocks of birds, and innumerable hosts of creeping things, and multitudinous swarms of bees and ants and chafers and flies, so that at the end of time there was not a hole or hollow or cavern, a river bank or a lake shore, a wave of water or a knoll of earth, a tree or a bush or a shrub, a stalk or a leaf or a slender rib of grass in all the greenwood that was not the homestead and the fortress of some creature of the woodland creatures.

A long time passed away. Ireland put her first bareness off her. The Old Wood remained a wood. Another time passed away, a very long time. Ireland put her second bareness off her. The Old Wood remained a wood. A third period of time elapsed. One day that came there was heard a new and terrible sound in the Wood: the measured heavy blows of an axe. For years those blows were heard. Full much of the timber of the Old Wood was cut down. The shoulders of the Bens and the hollows of the glens were once more left bare. But all the trees were not cut. Dubh-Chruach remained a wood. Ireland is passing through her third bareness, but that much of the Old Wood is woodland still. Dubh-Chruach and the glen beneath it and the borders of the lake that is in the middle of the glen: that much is still a Wood, and will be a Wood until the Day of Doom. Small though it be to-day, the Old Wood is there after all the ages, it and the lives it holds,

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féin agus a bfuil innici de dhúilí beo da amail do man beas innici féin. Mo éion dí, a fiolta buana bit-beo da na Sean-Cóille!

Céaró fáct ar éarar an Cóill rin éar coillteib na héireann? Tá, do éairear real dem' óise im' comhairde i mboctán pléibe ar a himeall. Da le mnaoi dem' muinntir an boctán pléibe rin, agus ba mire an siolla beas do bí aici as beačiusa a héanlaite agus as foraireadct a bó. Nuair nac mbíod don gno aici díom, tob' é mo éaiream aimpire imteadct im' éadon dohpaic ar fuo an fáraiz nó pinead riar fá ríat érainn as éirteadct le Cláirí na Cóille agus le hil-glórtai mion-daoine na foraisire. Ir mar rin do éuirear aithe ar a raib de dhúilí beo da fá foras na Cóille, roir éan agus oll-piart agus eile díob. D'fógluimear a raib de feandur agus de béal-oirear as ríct leo le rinnrearaect. Do meabruigear a raib d'annálaib agus d'irrib as reandirib na tcead n-éisciallta.

Ir dóda go bfuil núiniamra i gcroide gac Cóille, aect ní i gcomhairde ir féoir a bfaíl ná a bfaigailt; óir ir i gcosar fíor-íreal labartar i gcluar an tuine iad, agus má'r as éirteadct le n-a éroide féin nó as rmuainead ar a gnótaib féin nó ar gnótaib an tpaosail bíor an tuine ní tís leir an cosar úo do élor. Nó má éluineann ré é, tob' féoir do gan a tuisrint aect é as ceapad nac bfuil ann aect fead éin nó doiróan ciaróise. Ir eaglac dá gcairinn bliadain i scoill anoir nac gcluinfinn, dá airíge d'éirtefinn, aect éróhán na ngeas ar n-a luarsad le gaoit agus glórtá baota balda eile nac dtuisfinn. Aect do bí tuisrint agus creideam agus croide leinb asam nuair do éairtear an tSean-Cóill, agus do b'féoir liom bris agus ciall do baint ar a gualar ó luect mo múinte ra gCoill. Tob' féoir dá mbad i scoill eile do beinn nac dtioctad liom an ríeal do élor com foileir agus do éualar ná a bris do éadairt liom com éruinn agus tugar. Óir tá na coillte eile ur-nuad láim leir an gCoill ar a tceadaim, agus dá bris rin ir beas feandur nó béal-oirear adá i mearg a n-áireadac. Aect do bí an tSean-Cóill, mar doubrar nomam, amail do man beas innici féin ó geinead de'n céad uair i, agus éainis a feandur agus a hipre anuar glúin ar glúin leir na mílteib bliadain. Cá hiongnad, máiread, ríealta éasraimla do beir as reandairtib na Cóille rin?

Níorb' fada dom as gnáčiusa na Cóille gur tuigead dom nac mé féin an céad mac ós do éairtis i. Do éualar annro ir annróo iomrad ar

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like a little world in itself. I hail you, O steadfast, ever-living seeds of the Old Wood!

.

Why have I loved that Wood beyond the woods of Ireland? Because I spent a while of my youth living in a mountain hut on the verge of it. That mountain hut belonged to a woman of my people, and I was the little gilly she had to feed her fowl and to drive her cow to pasture. When she had no work for me to do it was my pastime to wander off like a lone barnacle through the wilds, or to stretch under the shade of a tree and to listen to the Harp of the Wood and to the many voices of the little ones of the forest. In that way I made friends with all the living creatures that were under the shelter of the Wood, birds and creeping things and the rest. I learned all the history and all the folklore that had been handed down among them. I got by heart whatever annals and chronicles the elders of the wild tribes had preserved.

I suppose that there are secrets in the heart of every Wood, but not always can they be found, or, when found, unravelled; for it is in an infinitely quiet whisper that they are spoken into one's ear, and if one is listening to one's own heart, or thinking of one's own concerns or of the concerns of the world, one cannot hear the whisper. Or if one hears it, one may not understand it, but may think it is only the whistle of a bird or the humming of a beetle. It is to be feared that if I were to spend a year in a wood now, however attentively I might listen, I should hear only the murmur of the branches tossed by the wind and other vain inarticulate voices that I should not understand. But I had the understanding and the faith and the heart of a child when I haunted the Old Wood, and I was able to take a meaning and a sense out of what I heard from those who taught me in the Wood. It may well be that, had it been in another wood I was, I could not have heard the story as clearly as I did hear it, or have gathered its meaning as accurately as I did gather it. For the other woods are modern beside the Wood I speak of, and for that reason there is little history or folklore among their inhabitants. But the Old Wood was, as I have said, like a little world in itself since it was first born, and its history and chronicles have come down from generation to generation for thousands of years. What wonder, then, that the shanachies of that Wood should have marvellous tales?

I was not long frequenting the Wood when it became manifest to me that I was not the first young lad that had haunted it. I heard here and there rumour of a little lad who had spent his life in

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máe beas do cáit a faogal innici na céadta bliadhán romham-rá. I n'óidí a céile o'foghluimear eadtra iongantac an mic b'is úo, as bailiugad an rgeil, mar doéarfa, taitl ir i b'fur, ainm tobair nó rructáin nó cuaire dom' cur ar an eolair annro nó focla éigin i gcainnt coróige nó i gceileadarcéirrige dom' treorugad annróo. Amannca do tigead an rgeal cugam mar do tiocfao glór eapa nó bolad bláit le gaoit, nó do mótuiginn im' éroide é gan don ní dá meadruugad dom, áct mar do bead cuimne rean-tairóirín as teadé ar air cugam i nghan fíor dom nó im' aímdeoin féin. Agus ir amlaio do-cíci dom ar uaireanncaib zup dom féin do bain an eadtra rin na céadta bliadhán ó foín, nó zupab don uine amáin mire agus an mac ós ar a tpráctad reancaióte na Coille, nó nári bain an eadtra o'don uine riám, áct mire as cur rnáite rgealaioeáca ar mo rmuaintib agus ar mo mianab féin. Áct ar uaireanncaib eile do tuiginn zo roiléir zo raib an mac beas ina beacáio tpráe dá raib, ina fuil agus ina feoil, ina uine agus ina óaonnaióe, com corporóda liom féin nó le haon máirac dá tceigead ar don rgoil liom. Do-cíci dom zo n-aicneocáinn é dá gcarcaoi ra rplige orm é, agus zo tuiugfínn a uplabra, agus zo tuiugfead reirean mire, agus zo noéanfaimír b'ráitreaáar le céile, agus zo tuiubraínn gan do ar méio a meannman agus ar óárac a éroide, agus zo maifínn do a noearna o'ole, agus zo molfaínn é ar a uilre ir do leán do'n raon do ceap do féin, nó do'n raon do ceap a óeíte aóarca do, agus zo b'rázfaimír caoin-ceileadrao as a céile dá mbead oráinn rgarad le céile arír. Agus do glaoóáinn air i n-uaignear na Coille, áct ní tigead cugam, agus do tuiginn zo raib ré maró leir na céadtaib bliadhán agus nac riublócaó ré an Coill rin zo do arír, agus nac raib beo ina óiaio ar an talam áct beagán dá rmuaintib agus beagán dá b'riatraib agus cuimne éigin ar beagán dá gniómaraib.

Do tiomruigea le céile ar énuarugea dá rmuaintib agus dá b'riatraib agus dá imteadtaib ó luét eolair na Coille. Ní abraim zup fígea an rgeal le céile ina ceapc. Do bí cuio de nári tuigea i gceapc nuair do cualar é. Do bí cuio de, b'féoir, nac raib ina fíor-ceapc as na rgealarótib féin. Áct a gcualar agus ar tuigea de, tá an méio rin fuaitce le céile gan earbaio gan iomarca ran eadtra ro im' óiaio.

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it hundreds of years before me. Piecemeal I learned the wondrous legend of that little lad, collecting the tale, so to say, in this place and in that, the name of a spring or a rill or a cavern enlightening me here, or some words in the talk of a skaldcrow or in the song of a blackbird, guiding me there. At times the story used to come to me like the voice of a waterfall or the scent of a flower borne by the wind, or I would feel it in my heart without anything suggesting it to me, but as if the memory of an old dream were coming back to me unconsciously or in my despite. And there were times when it used to seem to me that it was to myself all those adventures had happened hundreds of years ago, or that I and the little lad of whom the shanachies of the Wood spoke were one and the same, or that those adventures had never happened to anyone at all, but that I was putting the thread of story-telling on my own thoughts and my own desires. But at other times I understood clearly that that little lad had lived once upon a time, in flesh and blood, a human being, as physically actual as myself or as any boy that went to school with me. It used to seem to me that I should know him if I met him in the way, and that I should understand his speech, and that he would understand me, and that we should make a league of brotherhood together, and that I should love him for the greatness of his spirit and the boldness of his heart, and that I should forgive him all of evil he had done, and that I should praise him for the faithfulness with which he had followed the path he had appointed for himself, or the path his gods had appointed for him, and that we should bid a kindly farewell to each other if we had to part from each other again. And I used to call upon him in the loneliness of the Wood, but he never came to me, and I would realise that he had been dead for hundreds of years and that he would never walk that Wood again, and that there was nothing alive after him on earth but a few of his thoughts and a few of his words and some memory of a few of his deeds.

I have put together all that I garnered of his thoughts and his words and his exploits from the wise ones of the Wood. I do not say that I have woven the story properly. There was some of it that I did not understand properly when I heard it. There was some of it, it may be, which the storytellers themselves did not know properly. But as far as I heard it and understood it, I have pieced it together, without taking from it or adding to it, in this tale which follows.

To be continued