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**Macpherson, James**

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Conlath and Cuthona: A Poem.

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## CONLATH and CUTHÓNA:

## A P O E M\*.

**D**ID not Ossian hear a voice? or is it the found of days that are no more? Often does the memory of former times come, like the evening sun, on my soul. The noise of the chace is renewed; and, in thought, I lift the spear.—But Ossian did hear a voice: Who art thou, son of the night? The sons of little men are asleep, and the midnight wind is in my hall. Perhaps it is the shield of Fingal that echoes to the blast, it hangs in Ossian's hall, and he feels

\* Conlath was the youngest of Morni's sons, and brother to the celebrated Gaul, who is so often mentioned in Ossian's poems. He was in love with Cuthóna the daughter of Rumar, when Toscar the son of Kin-fena, accompanied by Fercuth his friend, arrived, from Ireland, at Mora where Conlath dwelt. He was hospitably received, and according to the custom of the times, feasted, three days, with Conlath. On the fourth he set sail, and coasting the *island of waves*, probably, one of the Hebrides, he saw Cuthóna hunting, fell in love with her, and carried her away, by force, in his ship. He was forced, by stress of weather, into I-thona a desert isle. In the mean-time Conlath, hearing of the rape,

failed after him, and found him on the point of sailing for the coast of Ireland. They fought; and they, and their followers fell by mutual wounds. Cuthóna did not long survive: for she died of grief the third day after. Fingal, hearing of their unfortunate death, sent Stormal the son of Moran to bury them, but forgot to send a bard to sing the funeral song over their tombs. The ghost of Conlath came, long after, to Ossian, to intreat him to transmit, to posterity, his and Cuthona's fame. For it was the opinion of the times, that the souls of the deceased were not happy, till their elegies were composed by a bard.—Thus is the story of the poem handed down by tradition.

R

it





it sometimes with his hands.—Yes!—I hear thee, my friend; long has thy voice been absent from mine ear! What brings thee, on thy cloud, to Ossian, son of the generous Morni? Are the friends of the aged near thee? Where is Oscar, son of fame?—He was often near thee, O Conlath, when the din of battle rose.

## GHOST of CONLATH.

SLEEPS the sweet voice of Cona, in the midst of his rustling hall? Sleeps Ossian in his hall, and his friends without their fame? The sea rolls round the dark I-thona\*, and our tombs are not seen by the stranger. How long shall our fame be unheard, son of the echoing Morven?

## OSSIAN.

O THAT mine eyes could behold thee, as thou fittest, dim, on thy cloud! Art thou like the mist of Lano; or an half extinguished meteor? Of what are the skirts of thy robe? Of what is thine airy bow?—But he is gone on his blast like the shadow of mist.—Come from thy wall, my harp, and let me hear thy sound. Let the light of memory rise on I-thona; that I may behold my friends. And Ossian does behold his friends, on the dark-blue isle.—The cave of Thona appears, with its mossy rocks and bending trees. A stream roars at its mouth, and Toscar bends over its course. Fercuth is sad by his side: and the maid † of his love sits at a distance, and weeps. Does the wind of the waves deceive me? Or do I hear them speak?

## TOSCAR.

THE night was stormy. From their hills the groaning oaks came down. The sea darkly-tumbled beneath the blast, and the roaring waves were climbing against our rocks.—The lightning came often

\* I-thonn, *island of waves*, one of the uninhabited western isles.

† Cuthona the daughter of Rumar, whom Toscar had carried away by force.





and shewed the blasted fern.—Fercuth! I saw the ghost of night\*. Silent he stood, on that bank; his robe of mist flew on the wind.—I could behold his tears: an aged man he seemed, and full of thought.

## FERCUTH.

IT was thy father, O Toscar; and he foresees some death among his race. Such was his appearance on Cromla, before the great Ma-ronnan † fell.—Ullin ‡! with thy hills of grass, how pleasant are thy vales! Silence is near thy blue streams, and the sun is on thy fields. Soft is the sound of the harp in Seláma ||, and lovely the cry of the hunter on Crómula. But we are in the dark I-thona, surrounded by the storm. The billows lift their white heads above our rocks: and we tremble amidst the night.

## TOSCAR.

WHITHER is the soul of battle fled, Fercuth with the locks of age? I have seen thee undaunted in danger, and thine eyes burning with joy in the fight. Whither is the soul of battle fled? Our fathers never feared.—Go: view the settling sea: the stormy wind is laid. The billows still tremble † on the deep, and seem to fear the blast. But view the settling sea: morning is gray on our rocks. The sun will look soon from his east; in all his pride of light.

\* It was long thought, in the North of Scotland, that storms were raised by the ghosts of the deceased. This notion is still entertained by the vulgar; for they think that whirlwinds, and sudden squalls of wind are occasioned by spirits, who transport themselves, in that manner, from one place to another.

fession concerning the extraordinary death of that hero.

† Ulster in Ireland.

|| Selámath—*beautiful to behold*, the name of Toscar's palace, on the coast of Ulster, near the mountain Cromla the scene of the epic poem.

‡ ———the face of ocean sleeps,

† Ma ronnán was the brother of Toscar: the translator has a poem in his pos-

And a still horror saddens all the deeps.

POPE'S HOMER.





I LIFTED up my sails, with joy, before the halls of generous Conlath. My course was by the isle of waves, where his love pursued the deer. I saw her, like that beam of the sun that issues from the cloud. Her hair was on her heaving breast; she, bending forward, drew the bow: her white arm seemed, behind her, like the snow of Cromla:—Come to my soul, I said, thou huntress of the isle of waves! But she spends her time in tears, and thinks of the generous Conlath. Where can I find thy peace, Cuthona, lovely maid!

## CU-THONA\*.

A DISTANT steep bends over the sea, with aged trees and mossy rocks: the billows roll at its feet: on its side is the dwelling of roes. The people call it Ardven. There the towers of Mora rise. There Conlath looks over the sea for his only love. The daughters of the chace returned, and he beheld their downcast eyes. Where is the daughter of Rumar? But they answered not.—My peace dwells on Ardven, son of the distant land!

## TOSCAR.

AND Cuthona shall return to her peace; to the halls of generous Conlath. He is the friend of Toscar: I have feasted in his halls.—Rise, ye gentle breezes of Ullin, and stretch my sails towards Ardven's shores. Cuthona shall rest on Ardven: but the days of Toscar will be sad.—I shall sit in my cave in the field of the sun. The blast will rustle in my trees, and I shall think it is Cuthona's voice. But she is distant far, in the halls of the mighty Conlath.

\* Cu-thona, *the mournful sound of the waves*; her name in tradition is Gorm-huil, *the blue-eyed maid*.  
Ossian, on account of her mourning to the





CUTHONA.

OH! what cloud is that? It carries the ghosts of my fathers. I see the skirts of their robes, like gray and watry mist. When shall I fall, O Rumar?—Sad Cuthona sees her death. Will not Conlath behold me, before I enter the narrow house\*?

OSSIAN.

AND he will behold thee, O maid: he comes along the rolling sea. The death of Toscar is dark on his spear; and a wound is in his side. He is pale at the cave of Thona, and shews his ghastly wound †. Where art thou with thy tears, Cuthona? the chief of Mora dies.—The vision grows dim on my mind:—I behold the chiefs no more. But, O ye bards of future times, remember the fall of Conlath with tears: he fell before his day ‡; and sadness darkened in his hall. His mother looked to his shield on the wall, and it was bloody †. She knew that her hero died, and her sorrow was heard on Mora.

ART thou pale on thy rock, Cuthona, beside the fallen chiefs? The night comes, and the day returns, but none appears to raise their tomb. Thou frightnest the screaming fowls || away, and thy tears forever flow. Thou art pale as a watry cloud, that rises from a lake.

THE

\* The grave.

† ——— *inhumati venit imago*

*Conjugis, ora modis adtolens pallida miris*

*Crudelis aras, trajeſtaque pectora ferro*

*Nudavit.*——

VIRG.

——the ghost appears

Of her unhappy Lord: the spectre stares,

And with erected eyes his bloody bosom

bares.

DRYDEN.

‡ *Nam quia nec fato, merita nec morte peribat,*

*Sed misera ante diem, &c.* VIRG.

‡ It was the opinion of the times, that the arms left by the heroes at home, became bloody the very instant their owners were killed, though at ever so great a distance.

|| The situation of Cuthona is like that of Rizpah, Saul's mistress, who sat by her sons





THE sons of the desert came, and they found her dead. They raise a tomb over the heroes; and she rests at the side of Conlath. —Come not to my dreams, O Conlath; for thou hast received thy fame. Be thy voice far distant from my hall; that sleep may descend at night. O that I could forget my friends: till my footsteps cease to be seen! till I come among them with joy! and lay my aged limbs in the narrow house!

sons after they had been hanged by the Gibeonites. until water dropped on them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the

And Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of the harvest of prey by night.

2 SAM. xxi. 10.

CARTHON:

