

Cròn nan Maighdean–Mhara
The Mermaid’s Croon

Ho! Mo nigh’n dubh
Ho! My dark haired girl
He! Mo nigh’n dubh
He! My dark haired girl
Mo nighean dubh
My dark haired girl
’S tu mo chuachag
You are my little chalice (of my love)

Caidil a luaidh
Sleep my darling
Fo chobhair nan stuadh
Under the foam of the waves
Air bodha na suain
On the reef of sleep
’S do bhruadar ’s a’ cheòban
Your dream is of the sea spray

Caidil a ghraidh
Sleep beloved
O caidil mu thràth
O sleep now
Is t-athair air bhàigh
Your father is loved
Is fadal mo phòig air
My kisses long for him

Eala rid’ thaobh
A swan by your side
Is roin os do chionn
And seals above you
Lacha Mhoire ’s a’ chaol
Mallards in the straits
’S cha’n fhaobar mo bhrònag
My sorrowful one cannot be stolen

Mo – my; **nigh’n (nighean)** – girl; **dubh** – dark haired; **tu** – you; **chuachag** - little cup, little chalice;

Caidil – sleep; **a luaidh** – darling; **Fo** – under; **chobhair-** foam; **nan stuadh** — of the wave; **Air** – on; **bodha** – rock or reef over which waves break; **suain** – sleep; **bhruadar** – dream; **cheòban** – sea mist or spray;

a ghraidh – beloved; **mu thràth** – already now; **t-athair** – father; **bhàigh** – affection, love; **fadal** – longing; **phòig** – kisses;

Eala – swan; **rid’** – by your; **thaobh** – side; **roin** – seals; **os** – over; **chionn** – head; **Lacha Mhoire** – Mary’s Ducks (Mallards); **chaol** – strait; **fhaobar** – ‘reiver-stolen’, plundered; **mo bhrònag** – my sorrowful one

This song is from Marjory Kennedy - Fraser’s “Songs of the Hebrides”. These are three verses from a traditional song which would have had many more verses. The remainder of the verses probably lie in an archive somewhere but we can only guess what the story might be. Reading Marjory Kennedy – Fraser’s footnotes tend to suggest that the mermaid fell in love with a mortal man and had child by him. She cannot be united with her lover, all that remains of their love is her daughter. This is her lullaby.

Part of the notes are as follows:

The *Swan* is “the daughter of the twelve moons” (*Nighean an da luan deug*) the *Seals* are “the children of the King of Lochlann [Norway] under spells” (*Clann Rìgh Lochlainn fo gheasa*) and the *Mallard* is under the Virgin’s protection; hence all three are “sacred”, and not even the reivers would meddle with the “tenderling” left under such protection.