

William Sharp and "Fiona Macleod"

A Life



WILLIAM F. HALLORAN



<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

© 2022 William F. Halloran



This work is licensed under a Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the text; to adapt the text for non-commercial purposes providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

William F. Halloran, *William Sharp and "Fiona Macleod": A Life*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0276>

Copyright and permissions for the reuse of many of the images included in this publication differ from the above. This information is provided in the captions and in the list of illustrations.

In order to access detailed and updated information on the license, please visit <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0276#copyright>. Further details about Creative Commons licenses are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>. Digital material and resources associated with this volume are available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0276#resources>

Every effort has been made to identify and contact copyright holders and any omission or error will be corrected if notification is made to the publisher.

ISBN Paperback: 9781800643260

ISBN Hardback: 9781800643277

ISBN Digital (PDF): 9781800643284

ISBN Digital ebook (epub): 9781800643291

ISBN Digital ebook (azw3): 9781800643307

ISBN XML: 9781800643314

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0276

Cover image: William Strang, William Sharp (c. 1897), etching, printed by David Strang. Photograph by William F. Halloran of author's copy (2019).

Cover design: Anna Gatti.

Chapter Twenty-Four

1904

During his brief visit to Greece in January 1903, Sharp fell in love with the landscape, the classical monuments, and a young American archaeologist. When he returned to Greece in late November 1903, this time with Elizabeth, he stayed four months. Besides renewing his friendship with the young woman, he intended to make additional notes for his projected “Greek Backgrounds” and for a travel book for English speaking visitors. Shortly after arriving, his plans were cut short by illness. According to Elizabeth, “the winter was very cold and at first my husband was very ill — the double strain of his life seemed to consume him like a flame” (*Memoir*, 374). In a late December letter, he assured Mrs. Philpot he had come out of his “severe feverish attack with erect (if draggled) colours.” He hoped “to march ‘cock-a-hoopishly’ into 1904 and even further if the smiling enigmatical gods permit.” Today, he continued,

I heard a sound as of Pan piping, among the glens on Hymettos, whereon my eyes rest so often and often so long dream. Tomorrow I’ll take Gilbert Murray’s fine new version of Hippolytus or Bacchae as my pocket companion to the Theatre of Dionysus on the hither side of the Acropolis; possibly my favourite Oedipus at Kolonos and read sitting on Kolonos itself and imagine I hear on the wind the rise and fall of the lonely ancient lives, serene thought-tranced in deathless music. And in the going of the old and the coming of the new year, a friend’s thoughts shall fare to you from far away Athens

The optimism of this letter was short-lived. He became ill again and remained so through most of January.

Late in the month, he began to feel better and described for Ernest Rhys his plan to travel southeast to “Mycenae and Argos & Tiryns” and

then "to Nauplia and if possible, to Sparta." Rhys included portions of this letter in his *Letters from Limbo* (80) and described Sharp as "wandering abroad after his deadly enemy diabetes had attacked him." This observation led to an insightful comment about Sharp's attitude toward the disease which would soon claim his life:

Not a bad way-bill for a sick wanderer, but whatever else he might be he always took his ailments and his threatened fate with courage and at times with a histrionic relish of his own predicament. [...] In truth it might be said he took both his mortal ailment and his early death with a light heart, and he would do nothing to delay the step of fate. He ate a pound of Turkish delight in Athens one day when the doctor had warned him he must eat nothing sweet, and at Newport, Isle of Wight, he took a plate of cakes one day out of a confectioner's window and ate them all with amazing gusto.

Elizabeth recalled that despite her husband's illness they enjoyed "pleasant companionship" with Robert Carl Bosanquet, Head of the English School of Archaeology, Henry Fowler, Head of the American School, and Dr. Wilhelm, Head of the Austrian School. They also befriended a Greek poet, at whose house they met "several of the rising Greek men of letters, and other residents and wanderers" (*Memoir*, 375–378). "With Spring sunshine and warmth," Elizabeth wrote "my husband regained a degree of strength, and it was his chief pleasure to take long rambles on the neighboring hills alone, or with the young American archaeologist, Mrs. Roselle L. Shields, a tireless walker." Sharp described one of those walks in a late February letter to Rhys:

Yesterday I had a lovely break from work, high up on the beautiful bracing dwarf-pine clad slopes of Pentelicos, above Kephisia, the ancient deme of Menander — and then across the country behind Hymettos, the country of Demosthenes and so back by the High Convent of St. John the Hunter, on the north spur of the Hymettian range, and the site of ancient Gargettos, the place of Epicurus' birth and boyhood. At sundown I was at Heracleion, some three or four miles from Athens — and the city was like pale gold out of which peaked Heracleion rose like a purple sapphire. The sky beyond, above Salamis, was all grass-green and mauve. A thundercloud lay on extreme Hymettos, rising from Marathon: and three rainbows lay along the violet dusk of the great hill-range.



Fig. 74 Mount Pentelicus is a mountain in Attica, Greece, situated northeast of Athens and southwest of Marathon. The mountain is covered in large part with forest (about 60 or 70%), and can be seen from southern Athens (Attica). Marble from Mount Pentelicus is of exceptionally high quality and was used to construct much of the Athenian Acropolis. *Photograph* by Dimorsitanos (2008), Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3921687>, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Sharp assured Rhys he felt much better: “I am apparently well and strong again, hard at work, hard at pleasure, hard at life, as before, and generally once more full of hope and energy.”

A Sharp letter to E. C. Stedman many months later (August 29) casts further light on his illness in Greece and his recovery:

I was all but done for in the autumn by a severe seizure of a form of diabetes, and after the rigorous treatment at Llandrindod Wells & elsewhere I went to Greece for the winter & spring. I got worse & worse all the same till about February. Then spring came over Hymettos, and new life came to me, & in more ways than one, & Attica became a garden of Eden, & I grew swiftly and continuously better. A heavenly trip in the Peloponnesus put an additional touch to it and a month or so later I sailed from Athens a new man.

“Hard at pleasure,” “hard at life, as before,” “a new life came to me, & in more ways than one, & Attica became a garden of Eden.” In writing to Rhys and Stedman, Sharp often adopted the persona of a romantic Lothario. In this instance, there was some truth behind those phrases for Sharp was captivated by Roselle Lathrop Shields, the young American archaeologist.

A previously unknown letter dated February 9, 1906 (following Sharp's death in December 1905) from Catherine Janvier to Mrs. Roselle Shields, casts further light upon their relationship. Having sent Roselle an inscribed copy of her book about cats, *London Mews*, Catherine wrote on February 8 to say, "the cats are crossing the ocean and I hope will reach you safely." The letter, along with a newspaper clipping of a portrait of Sharp, was in Roselle Shields' copy of the cat book when it sold a few years ago. She had written to Catherine about her regret in not being with Sharp at Alexander Hood's Castle Maniace in Sicily when he died. Catherine responded: "My dearie, I am beginning to think that it is you and I who best know and understand our dear boy. Do not be influenced by others or their opinions. How I wish you could have been with him." She then expressed her regret at not receiving any letters from Sharp after his final arrival at Maniace:

How I envy you your four last letters — had I but one! Well, I feel I know how he longed for his wee "Roseen." How weary he was of many things. It breaks my heart to think of him there — alone — I know that the best of care was taken of him, that every comfort was his, but I know that he was "alone," he knew too, I am sure, that it had to be.

Of the many letters Catherine received from Sharp since their first introduction in 1889, only a small number remained; "many letters were destroyed, otherwise he would not have written with the freedom that he did." She does not know what Sharp did with her letters. "Should E. [Elizabeth] read them, if he kept them, she will be greatly puzzled."

Catherine continued:

What you say about P. and Mary and E. not knowing coincides with what I thought. In the letter that never was written he promised full details of P. and directions as to some matters — I never can know now. How I wish I were near, there is so much to ask, so much for us — you and I — to talk of.

The "E." who did not know — presumably how close Roselle's relationship with Sharp had been — was Elizabeth since Catherine referred to her as "E." earlier in the letter. The "Mary" was either Sharp's sister who provided the Fiona handwriting or Mary Wilson who accompanied the Sharps to Italy, perhaps to help Elizabeth care for her husband whose health was failing quickly. The "P" may have been

Mrs. J. H. Philpot with whom Sharp had been sharing his thoughts in correspondence and who loaned some of her letters, including one from Greece dated December 1903, to Elizabeth for the *Memoir*. Catherine agreed with Roselle that neither P., nor Mary, nor E., were aware of the intimacy of Sharp's relationship with Roselle. She also shared Roselle's regret that the woman he loved [Roselle] and the woman who often acted as his mother confessor [Catherine] could not be with him during his last hours.

Catherine's purpose was to console Roselle and assure her that despite Sharp's close relationships with other women, she, Roselle, was his true love. After describing what Sharp had left for her during his visit to New York in late November 1904, including the handwritten manuscript of the long Fiona dedication to her ("Prologue to Kathia") in *The Washer of the Ford* (1896), Catherine concluded, "as soon as I can, I will hunt up all he said of you. Unfortunately, much is destroyed." Then she affixed this postscript:

Sunday Oct. 22. Venice — 1905 (In reference to our, yours and my, first meeting) "Remember that her all surrounding love saved me, I am sure, in far away Greece, and what it has meant ever since to me." I cannot get at the earlier ones yet.

To interpret, Catherine received a letter from Sharp written on October 20, 1905, less than two months before he died, when he and Elizabeth were in Venice on their way to Sicily. In it, according to Catherine, he said Roselle's love saved his life in Greece in the spring of 1904. Assuming the accuracy of Catherine's postscript, Sharp's relationship with Roselle echoes that with Edith Rinder which began a decade earlier. His "long rambles" among classical ruins with Roselle in Greece were like those with Edith in the Roman Campagna in 1891. His relationship with Edith lasted many years and led to the birth of Fiona Macleod. By the time Edith gave birth to a baby girl in 1901, it had begun to cool and devolve into one of close friendship. How his relationship with Roselle would have developed had Sharp lived longer, we cannot know, but it brought a measure of joy and happiness — a welcome renewal of youth — to his final years.

Two photographs of Sharp illustrate the toll taken by his illnesses. In the 1894 photograph, he was a forty years old, handsome, virile man

with dark hair. In fewer than ten years, at the age of fifty, he had become an old man with grey hair and a sad and worried demeanor.



Fig. 75 Photograph of William Sharp by Frederick Hollyer (1894). Reproduced from *Poems by William Sharp*. Selected and arranged by Mrs. William Sharp (London, William Heinemann, 1912). Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Sharp_1894.jpg#/media/File:William_Sharp_1894.jpg, Public Domain.

Given the contrast between these two portraits, we must assume Sharp's relationship with Roselle Shields in Athens lacked the ardor of his relationship with Edith Rinder in Rome. Since he had become an old man suffering a fatal illness, it likely resembled that between a father and daughter. From Catherine Janvier's recently discovered letter, nevertheless, we can conclude Roselle Shields brought a ray of sunshine into Sharp's life that dispelled for a time his thoughts of declining health and imminent death.

In 1906, shortly after Sharp died, Catherine Janvier began an essay describing the genesis of Fiona Macleod and her discovery upon reading the first Fiona book (*Pharais*) that Sharp was its author. Her essay began as a paper read to the Aberdeen branch of the Franco-Scottish society in



Fig. 76 Photograph of William Sharp, taken by Alexander Nelson Hood, the Duke of Bronte, at his Castle Maniace in November 1903. Reproduced by Elizabeth Sharp in her *Memoir* (358).

June 1906 and became a lengthy article in the *North American Review* in April 1907. After reproducing parts of her surviving letters from Sharp in the article, Catherine made some of them available to Elizabeth for use in the *Memoir*. Roselle Shields also shared some of her letters with Elizabeth as she is the unidentified friend to whom he addressed letters near the end of his life. Elizabeth maintained a friendship with Roselle and facilitated the publication by Thomas Mosher in 1908 of *A Little Book of Nature Thoughts*, poems by Fiona Macleod selected by Mrs. William Sharp and Roselle Lathrop Shields with a foreword signed R. L. S.

Returning to Sharp's experience in Greece in the first three months of 1904, he wrote in early February a Fiona letter to the Celtic scholar and London publisher, Alfred Nutt, which he sent to Edinburgh where Mary copied and dated it February 18. Nutt had written to ask Fiona if she would like to write a comprehensive retelling of Gaelic stories which he thought Lady Gregory had done only partially and not very well in *Poets and Dreamers: Studies and Translations from the Irish*, published in 1903. Writing as Fiona, Sharp reflected the distance that had developed between the Scottish and the Irish Celtic movements. Fiona had recently reread Lady Gregory's book and found it

not nearly so "original" as I thought it — I mean, in the sense that far more of the book is "lifted," as you say, than I had first noticed. And more than ever I realized how often the old is weakened in the retelling. There are certain episodes and even chapters which I reread with a chill indifference, when not with impatience. More and more I realise that these beautiful old Gaelic tales must be given either in the crude simplicity of direct translation or else in a modern retelling that shall be as far as possible identical in erudition and outlook and as exactly correspondent as is practical in another and more modern language and in other and more complicated exigencies of art.

Were she to attempt the retelling Nutt proposed, she would proceed with the "utmost simplicity and directness, and not at all unless in imaginative recovery of mood."

She shared Nutt's wish to have the project done, but her "dreams and hopes" were hampered by her private circumstances, and she doubted her ability to accomplish with "finality of achievement what otherwise is best left undone." Nutt must have asked Yeats to undertake the project before approaching Fiona.

I too had hoped Mr. Yeats might do this thing. It is not to be thought of from him, now: not from lack of genius, or even scope of vision, but from his growing preoccupation with so many matters and conflicting interests and perhaps too from his lack of withdrawal from continuous personal influences, which rarely do much for the imaginative writer but oftener disintegrate what isolation has achieved.

Sharp believed Yeats was wasting his time and talent. His involvement in the cause of Irish nationalism and his relationship with Maud Gonne, an active Nationalist, interfered, so Sharp believed, with his imaginative work. Fiona could not think of others fitted for the work, but she offered the possibility that someone who has been influenced by her own imaginative work will emerge. If so, she will be pleased by having done a "truly good thing." Some day she might be able to take up Nutt's "great task," but she could do so only "with an inward certainty" that she, and she alone could do it.

Fiona proceeded to complement Nutt for his work in resurrecting the Gaelic past: Were she to attempt the project, it would only be because Nutt and others have generously revealed to her the "old and beautiful ideal." Responding to another question from Nutt, she was not thinking of issuing "Celtic Runes" which he may have been interested

in publishing, but she was busy finishing a volume of essays [which became *The Winged Destiny*] and preparing a volume of verse that appeared only after Sharp died. This letter describes how Sharp would have handled the retelling of old Celtic tales; its length and tone of regret suggest Sharp would have undertaken the project were he younger and more energetic. After all, a major publisher, himself a Celtic specialist, asked him to undertake a project that would cement Fiona's reputation as a Celtic specialist. Though not expressed in the letter, he was simply too weak, too exhausted, too ill to undertake a project of that dimension however desirable the financial package might have been.

When the Sharps left Greece on March 24, 1904, their destination was the French Riviera. They travelled by ship at least part of the way, and a Fiona letter to Mosher dated March 30 and written "At Sea" suggests they may have stopped briefly in Naples. When she "put in" there, Fiona wrote, she found in her forwarded mail Mosher's April *Bibelot* which contained "a too generously worded appreciation" of her work. It also contained a Fiona essay entitled "Sea Magic and Running Water" which caused Sharp to draft the March 30 Fiona letter and send it not to Edinburgh but, in order to save time, to London for Edith Rinder to type and mail to Mosher. Fiona had not authorized him to publish that essay since it was to appear in *The Winged Destiny*, a volume Chapman & Hall planned to publish later in 1904 both in England and the United States. Were the publisher to see the *Bibelot*, he would probably delay English publication and reconsider an American edition. In his introduction to "Sea Magic and Running Water" in the *Bibelot*, Mosher wrote: "Later we hope to give some further studies, should what is here reprinted find favour, — more especially three very beautiful contributions to recent English reviews." He listed them: "The Magic Kingdoms" (published in the *Monthly Review* of 10 January 1903, 100–111); "The Sunset of Old Tales" (published in the *Fortnightly Review* of April 1, 1903, 1087–1110); and "The Woman at the Crossways" (published in the *Fortnightly Review* of November 2, 1903, 869–873). Since these essays would also be included in *The Winged Destiny*, Fiona told Mosher not to print them in his *Bibelot*. "If people in America," Fiona wrote, "can buy the best part of my new book for 10 cents, [the price of a single issue of the *Bibelot*] they will not be likely to pay for imported copies [of the book] at a dollar and a half or whatever the selling price may be." She went on to mention

essays not destined for *The Winged Destiny* which Mosher could print in the *Bibelot*.

On their way to the French Riviera, the Sharps may have stopped in Bordighera on the Italian Riviera to see Dr. Goodchild as they had done in the spring of 1903. As Elizabeth recalled in the *Memoir*, they "loitered" for a time in Hyeres on the French Riviera "in the month of cherry blossoms." After stopping for a time with the Janviers and other friends in Provence, they continued northwest toward Bordeaux. Writing to Catherine Janvier from La Puy on April 18, Sharp described the "magnificent old feudal rock-Chateau fortress of Polignac, erected on the site of the famous Temple of Apollo (raised here by the Romans on the still earlier site of a Druidic Temple to the Celtic Sun God)." His time in Sicily and Greece had quickened his interest in the remains of Druidic and Roman civilizations in Western Europe. The site caused him to realize "how deep a hold even in the France of today is maintained by the ancient Pagan faith." By early May, the Sharps were back in London where they rented rooms for the summer in Bayswater's Leinster Square.

In June, Alexander Jessup asked Sharp if he would like to write a volume in a *French Men of Letters* series he was editing for the J. P. Lippincott Company in Philadelphia. Sharp responded enthusiastically on June 14: he was a specialist in "Sainte-Beuve in criticism, Hello in philosophy & criticism, Leconte de L'Isle, Baudelaire, and Villiers de L'Isle Adam — These with Chateaubriand, of whom I have long been intimate, are the names with which I am most at home." For the pleasure he would have in writing and because of concurrent work, he would prefer to write a volume on Mistral, Leconte de L'Isle, or Villiers de L'Isle Adam. Before committing, he would need to know and approve the terms. If satisfactory, he would begin drafting the book in the coming winter and finish it by mid-summer. It was decided he would do the Leconte de L'Isle volume, and he began collecting material for it during the summer. His undertaking this work indicated both his continuing need for money and his recurring optimism about his health. It was a much easier project than the comprehensive retelling of Gaelic stories Alfred Nutt proposed for Fiona in February.

Sharp remained well throughout July and into August, but his thoughts were on the nature and quality of his accomplishments as a writer. In early July, he wrote under his own name to an unidentified

friend who was also a writer and who knew he was Fiona. He thanked the friend for feeling “so deeply the beauty that has been so humbly and eagerly and often despairingly sought.” He then reflected on the “long road, the road of art”:

those who serve with passion and longing and unceasing labour of inward thought and outward craft are the only votaries who truly know what long and devious roads must be taken, how many pitfalls have to be avoided or escaped from, how many desires have to be foregone, how many hopes have to be crucified in slow death or more mercifully be lost by the way, before one can stand at last on “the yellow banks where the west wind blows,” and see, beyond, the imperishable flowers, and hear the immortal voices (*Memoir*, 382–383).

He concluded with a reference to Fiona’s *The Winged Destiny* which was about to appear:

Destiny puts dust upon dreams, and silence upon sweet airs, and stills songs, and makes the hand idle, and the spirit as foam upon the sea. For the gods are jealous, O jealous and remorseless beyond all words to tell. And there is so little time at the best ... and the little gain, the little frail crown, is so apt to be gained too late for the tired votary to care, or to do more than lie down saying “I have striven, and I am glad, and now it is over, and I am glad!”

Reflecting on his life, Sharp recognized it might soon be over.

On the second of August he wrote again to the same friend (*Memoir*, 385–386). Yesterday had been “one of the loveliest days of the year, with the most luminous atmosphere I have seen in England — the afternoon and evening divinely serene and beautiful.” He spent the day in the “glowing warmth and wonderful radiance” of Glastonbury and its neighborhood. His companion was John Goodchild who put him “unknowing to a singular test.” Goodchild hoped

with especial and deep hope that in some significant way I would write or utter the word “Joy” on this 1st day of August (the first three weeks of vital import to many, and apparently for myself too) — and also to see if a certain spiritual influence would reach me. Well, later in the day (for he could not prompt or suggest and had to await occurrence) we went into the lovely grounds of the ancient, ruined Abbey, one of the loveliest things in England, I think. I became restless and left him and went and lay down behind an angle of the East end, under the tree. I smoked, and then rested idly, and then began thinking of some correspondence I

had forgotten. Suddenly I turned on my right side, stared at the broken stone of the angle, and felt vaguely moved in some way. Abruptly and unpremeditatedly, I wrote down three enigmatic and disconnected lines. I was looking curiously at the third when I saw Dr. G. approach. "Can you make anything out of that," I said — "I've just written it, I don't know why." This is the triad.

From the Silence of Time, Time's Silence borrow.
In the heart of To-day is the word of To-morrow.
The Builders of Joy are the Children of Sorrow.

With Goodchild, Sharp could indulge his belief, as he had earlier with Yeats, that the spirit world surrounds and sometimes intervenes in the natural world.

Sharp's fascination with the realm of spirits is a controlling motif in the stories and essays in *The Winged Destiny* which began with a "Dedicatory Introduction" to Goodchild (vii–xii). The spirit of the book and the nature of Sharp's relationship with Goodchild are exemplified by the last paragraph though Goodchild was unaware it was Sharp speaking through Fiona:

But you — you are of the little clan, for whom this book is: you who have gone upon dark ways, and have known the starless road, and perchance on that obscure way learned what we have yet to learn. For you, and such as you, it is still a pleasure to gather bindweed of thoughts and dreams, these thoughts, to the airs and pauses and harmonies of considered speech. So, by your acceptance of this book, let me be not only of your fellowship but of that little scattered clan to whom the wild bees of the spirit come, as secret wings in the dark, with the sound and breath of forgotten things.

Elizabeth included in the *Memoir* (385) part of a July letter from Goodchild which she called his "first acknowledgement of the dedication." The official publication date of *The Winged Destiny* was October 7, 1904. If Elizabeth's dating is correct, Goodchild saw a draft or a proof of the dedication three months earlier.

Some of the stories and essays in *The Winged Destiny* were written in the summer of 1902 in the west of Scotland (*Memoir*, 344). In an August 23, 1902, letter, he told Alexander Hood the book — then to be called "The Magic Kingdom" — had been postponed until the following year. In an October 1902 letter to Catherine Janvier, he said he intended to put together a volume of Gaelic essays and Spiritual studies called *For the*

Beauty of an Idea. In Fiona's March 30, 1904, letter to Mosher, the book had become *The Winged Destiny* and "For the Beauty of an Idea" had become a section containing the essays "Celtic" and "The Gaelic Heart." The beautiful idea set forth in these two essays and the "Preface" to the section is that of pan-Celticism, that writers in Scotland, Wales, and especially Ireland should set aside their nationalistic passions and support each other as they write in English about myths and legends of the Gael, thereby contributing to the large canon of British literature. Most of the book's essays had appeared in British periodicals, but Sharp made some revisions and additions and settled on the internal arrangement of the book while he was in Greece. He thought Chapman & Hall would publish it in April or early May 1904, but it was delayed until October

One story in *The Winged Destiny*, "The Lynn of Dreams" (134–140), had a special meaning for Sharp. It tells the story of a writer — "let us call him John o'Dreams" — who loved words and was able to do marvellous things with them. "But he had a fatal curiosity. Year by year this had grown upon him. He wanted to know 'the well-springs of all literature.'" He sought it everywhere in the great masters of literature and failed to find it. One day as he lay dreaming by a pool in the woods, "Dalua, the Master of Illusions, the Fool of Faery" appeared and offered to take him to the Lynn of Dreams where he would reveal "the souls of words in their immortal shape and colour, and how the flow of a secret tide continually moves them into fugitive semblances of mortal colour and mortal shape." Reaching the Lynn of Dreams, John o'Dreams saw "his heart's desire bending like a hind of the hill and quenching her thirst." He saw the "mortal shape and colour of words" and, looking deeper, he saw "the souls of words, in their immortal shape and colour." Having found paradise, "his soul cried out for joy." But soon Dalua reappeared and told him to drink from "the Cup of which Tristan drank when he loved Yseult beyond the ache of mortal love, the Cup of Wisdom that gives madness and death before it gives knowledge and life." After drinking from the cup, the writer lost all his creative ability, "the master-touch, the secret art, the craft. He became an 'obscure stammerer.' At the last he was dumb. And then his heart broke, and he died." Sharp identified with John o'Dreams who came to realize perfection in art, as in life, is inseparable from death. Writing through

the Fiona persona enabled him to tell his personal story while avoiding the tincture of autobiography.

The first half of the book's final essay, "The Winged Destiny" (341–364), reproduced the "Foreword" to Fiona's "The House of Usna" which Thomas Mosher published as a book in 1902. It asserts the need to move beyond Ibsen's realism to plays like "The House of Usna" which portray the mystery of life and the spiritual forces at work in the world. Sharp wrote the play in response to Yeats' 1896 request that Fiona join him in producing dramas about mythological Celtic figures and the spiritual forces that moved them.

The second half of "The Winged Destiny" essay was written in Greece. Sharp borrowed the name Agathōn a well-known Greek poet and dramatist, for a sculptor who created at Delphi for a "Thracian prince" a statue of Destiny. She was a woman with the "brows and mien of Athena herself," whose "down-looking eyes were all but closed." . A young sculptor, who may have been a student of Agathōn, created at Delphi a year later another statue of Destiny, which was "held to be more beautiful, to be strange and beautiful to disquietude, to trouble the soul." This statue was a youth

with upward lifted face, and eyes looking out through time and change and circumstance: young, yet with weight of deep thought on the brows: serene. yet somehow appalling, as though a most ancient presence out of eternity looked from the newly carved marble. He was winged too, with great wings, as though he had come from afar, and was but a moment earth-lit.

People wondered if the youth was the "ancient and dreaded god, imaged in changeless youth, Eros. Or was he "Anteros, the god of requited love, brother of Eros, the god of unrequited love. "The sculptor had suddenly laid aside his life when he laid aside his chisel," but his handyman said the statue was The Winged Destiny. Years later, a wandering priest decreed "the Stern Mistress of the veiled eyes was Fate and Retribution; the Divine Youth was Love and Redemption. The one was born of Man and the Spirit of Time; the other was born of God and the Spirit of Eternity."

Since neither statue exists at Delphi, we may wonder where Sharp found The Winged Destiny that gave his book its title. One need look only as far as London's Piccadilly Square and the figure Albert Gilbert

sculpted for the top of the Lord Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain. Commonly called Eros, the figure was designed to be Anteros, his opposite, which Gilbert described “as portraying reflective and mature love, as opposed to Eros or Cupid, the frivolous tyrant.” It was erected in 1893 to commemorate the philanthropic works of Anthony Ashley Cooper, seventh Earl of Shaftesbury (1801–1885), who expressed his “forward-looking love” by establishing schools for childhood education and eliminating the scourge of child-labor.



Fig. 77 Statue of Anteros, Shaftesbury Memorial, Piccadilly Circus, London. Sculpted by Alfred Gilbert and erected in 1893. Photograph by Diego Delso (2014), Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fuente_Eros,_Piccadilly_Circus,_Londres,_Inglaterra,_2014-08-11,_DD_159.JPG, CC BY-SA 4.0.

After ruminating on the mystery of Fate, Sharp/Fiona declared there are two mighty forces at work in what we call Destiny. First, there is the “sombre and inscrutable Genius of this world, which weaves with time and races and empires, with life and death and change, and in the weft of whose web our swift-passing age, our race, our history, are no more than vivid gleams for a moment turned to the light.”

Second, there is a

Winged Destiny, a Creature of the Eternal, inhabiting infinitude, so vast and incommensurable that no eye can perceive, no imagination limn, no thought overtake, and yet that can descend upon your soul or mine as dew upon blades of grass, as wind among the multitudinous leaves, as the voice of sea and forest that can rise to the silence of mountain-brows or sink in whispers through the silence of a child's sleep — a Destiny that has no concern with crowns and empires and the proud dreams of men, but only with the soul, that flitting shadow, more intangible than dew, yet whose breath shall see the wasting of hills and the drought of oceans.

Beyond the lower force of Fate and the higher force of Destiny there is a Winged Destiny that leans

from Eternity into Time, and whispers to the soul through symbol and intuition the inconceivable mystery of the divine silence. [...] the Shepherd with whom, in the dark hour, we must go at last, to whose call we must answer when the familiar passions and desires and longings are as dust on the wind, and only that remains which so little we consider, only that little shaken flame of the spirit, which is yet of the things that do not pass, which is of the things immortal.

These passages reveal what was on Sharp's mind as he finished the essay in the spring of 1904. He knew he did not have long to live, and he must have shared his thoughts about the Winged Destiny, about the end of life, with Roselle Shields who, he said, saved his life during their long walks in the Grecian landscape.

In the "Foreword" of *A Little Book of Nature Thoughts* (i–xi), Roselle Shields asserted the ancient Greeks "felt and showed Beauty is the essence of life." Sharp convinced her the Celtic vision was a "reawakening of the old Hellenic harmony between the eternal love of beauty and the passionate longing for truth." With Elizabeth's help, Roselle selected and reproduced three quotations — one from Richard Jeffries and two from Emerson — which equate the highest life with the search for Beauty. "The Lynn of Dream" expressed the belief that the attainment of perfect beauty is synonymous with death. The conclusion of Fiona's "The Winged Destiny" expressed the belief that a shepherd descends at the moment of death and leads the spirit into the realm of immortals. Roselle Shields stated in the "Foreword" her belief in an "indefinable something, veiled, exquisite, and sombre, which hovers

above the commonplace and illumines the sentiments and passions." In this context, her disappointment in not being with Sharp when he died is understandable. She missed the chance to hold his hand and comfort him as the shepherd descended and led his soul across the boundary that separates life and death. Such was the power Sharp exercised through the Fiona writings and the force of his presence over many women and men who returned the love he, like Anteros, expended.

Following "an ideal summer of warmth and radiance," Sharp fell ill again. On August 29, he wrote to E. C. Stedman

And now I am again at Llandrindod Wells in Wales [where he had gone to recuperate the previous fall], & under the specialist's rigorous regime as to waters, diet, exercise, & so forth — but (despite a recent & sudden & somewhat severe access of the ailment, now got well in hand however) more precautionarily than of necessity. Damp & raw cold are my worst enemies, & so, as for years past, there is no thought of our spending the winter in England. But being in so much greater general health than I was last year (in Sept. last the specialist gave me "a few months!") it is not necessary to leave at October-end for Sicily, Greece, or Egypt. In fact, we had projected going to Stockholm, & then via Berlin & Leipzig to Dresden & Munich: & then later to Italy. It is still our intention to spend January, February, & March in Rome — which for me is the City of Cities. But we are going to it via New York!

He and Elizabeth intended to leave England near the end of October, spend six weeks or so in New York, and then sail directly to the Mediterranean. He asked if it would be convenient for them to stay with the Stedmans for a few days upon arrival "till we are able to look about & see what we can settle as to quarters within the limited reach of our very restricted finances." He mentioned his "Literary Geography" articles, which had been running serially in the *Pall Mall Magazine*, would be out in book-form in October. Elizabeth's little book on *Rembrandt* (London, Methuen & Company, 1904) was having an exceptionally good reception. He was busy collecting and revising his literary essays which had appeared in various periodicals over the years. He and Elizabeth would return to London in a week or two "for a month's hard work before [getting ready] for New York."

In a September 20 letter to Alexander Jessup, he withdrew his plan to write a book about Leconte de L'Isle for the *French Men of Letters* series. His deteriorating health had forced him to reduce his commitments:

Several of my immediate plans and later projects have to be relinquished, materially modified, or indefinitely postponed. My health, which despite a strong physique has long been far from what it ought to be, is now seriously complicated by what the doctors have discovered, namely an acute and dangerous attack of Diabetes. It has been arrested by rigorous dieting and the famous treatment at Llandrindod Wells — but it has not only weakened me and brought out certain climatic and other sensitiveness, but renders imperative the medical advice given me to lessen my work to the minimum compatible with well-being and the means to live, and to spend at least six months of the year in the South of Europe in as dry and sunny a winter-climate as I can afford to obtain. In the circumstances it is out of the question for me to consider further the writing of the Leconte de Lisle volume.

Aside from illness, he found Jessup's proposed terms unacceptable; another American, he claimed, had offered much better terms for a shorter manuscript.

Helen Bartlett Bridgman (1855–1935) an American writer and friend of Mosher, had written to Fiona, praising her work and asking why she was so reclusive. Sharp responded cordially as Fiona in mid-September. The letter has the usual excuses designed to pre-empt any requests for a meeting and one masterfully constructed sentence that cuts two ways:

I am content to do my best, as the spirit moves me, and as my sense of beauty compels me; and if, with that, I can also make some often much-needed money, enough for the need as it arises; and, further, can win the sympathy and deep appreciation of the few intimate and the now many unknown friends whom, to my great gladness and pride, I have gained, then, indeed, I can surely contentedly let wider "fame" (of all idle things the idlest, when it is, as it commonly is, the mere lip-repute of the curious and the shallow) go by, and be indifferent to the lapse of possible but superfluous greater material gain.

Just as it was necessary for Fiona to preserve her solitude and reject wider fame so her very existence kept her creator from the fame he deserved.

By September 22, Sharp had received a letter from Mrs. Stedman saying she and her husband were not well enough to have overnight house guests, but her granddaughter would try to find suitable lodgings for the Sharps in the city. In his reply on the twenty-second, Sharp expressed sorrow in hearing about their illnesses and assured her he

understood why they could not have guests. In his August 29 letter to Stedman, Sharp said they intended to spend six weeks in New York, but now, "for health's sake & other reasons," they would spend only a month in America and part of that in Boston. They would be glad to have Laura Stedman, Mrs. Stedman's granddaughter, help them find modestly priced adjacent rooms, "if possible roomy & pleasant enough to use also occasionally for writing in," centrally located and "preferably well up Central Park Way." On November third they would board the *S.S. Menominee* which was due in New York on the thirteenth. By the end of September, their New York plans had crystallized. The Janviers were going to Mexico in mid-November, Sharp explained, and had offered their rooms: "They will be back by about the 1st or 2nd of December — & as we don't sail from New York for the Mediterranean till either December 10th or 12th (12th I think is the date — & the last date the doctors want me to be in a cold & damp climate, where I shouldn't be at all, tho' I am wonderfully better) we'll see something of them." By late October, the couple had decided to spend the last week of their American visit in Boston and sail from there to Naples on December 10.

The trip's "immediate object," Elizabeth wrote, "was that I should know in person some of the many friends my husband valued there, and I was specially interested to make the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Stedman, who gave me a warm welcome, of Mr. and Mrs. Alden, Mr. and Mrs. R. Watson Gilder, Mr. John Lafarge, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe, and Miss Caroline Hazard whom we visited at Wellesley College" (*Memoir*, 393). Upon arriving in New York, they went directly to the Janvier's apartment on West 49th Street and were entertained during the following weeks by, amongst others, the Aldens in Hoboken and the Gilders in New York. They spent Thanksgiving Day with the Stedmans in Bronxville, and Sharp used a piece of their "Lawrence Park" stationery for a letter to Bliss Perry at the *Atlantic Monthly* in Boston. Enclosing a note of introduction from Stedman, Sharp asked Perry if he could see him on one of the four days he would be in Boston before sailing for Italy.

Soon after the Janviers returned to reclaim their apartment, the Sharps, on December 1, went to Newport, Rhode Island to spend a long weekend with Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Livingston Mason. Arthur Mason derived a fortune from The Rhode Island Locomotive Company which

produced more than 3,400 steam locomotives between 1866 and 1899. The Masons lived in Halidon Hall, a twenty room Gothic structure with a commanding view of the harbor. The invitation came from Arthur's wife, Edith Bucklin Hartshorn Mason, a formidable woman who founded the Rhode Island chapter of the National Society of Colonial Dames and served on the board of the Rhode Island Sanitary and Relief Association which provided aid and comfort to men fighting in the Spanish American War. Catherine Janvier arranged the invitation, either directly or through her friend Caroline Hazard who was President of Wellesley College and a native of Newport. In any case, the Sharps enjoyed a long weekend amid the cream of Newport society. On Monday, December 5 they boarded a train to Boston to have dinner and spend the night with Caroline Hazard in the house she built with her own funds for herself and future Presidents of Wellesley College. That evening they joined the celebration of the opening of a new residence hall on the campus. On the sixth, they moved to the Thorndike Hotel where they spent four days before boarding their ship.

President Hazard's hospitality was boundless. She arranged for Elizabeth Sharp to tour Wellesley on Monday and Radcliffe College on Wednesday; for both Sharps to call on Julia Ward Howe on Thursday; and, best of all, to visit "Fen Hall to see Mrs. Gardiner's Collection" on Friday. Isabella Stewart Gardner (1840–1924) was a wealthy art collector, philanthropist, and patron of the arts who was said to be the model for Isabel Archer in Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady*. After marrying John Lowell "Jack" Gardner in 1860, they settled in Boston. When Isabella's wealthy father died in 1891, she received a large inheritance, and they began building a world class collection of paintings, statues, tapestries, photographs, silver, ceramics, and manuscripts. Following her husband's death in 1898, Isabella carried through his plans to build a home for their collection. Modelled on the Renaissance palaces of Venice, especially the Palazzo Barbaro, and located in the fens area of Boston, the building, called Fenway Court, surrounds a glass-covered garden courtyard, the first of its kind in America. Isabella designed for herself an apartment on the building's top floor which now serves as the offices of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. For the museum's opening night — January 1, 1903 — she invited four hundred guests who were entertained by members of the Boston Symphony. Only two years after its opening,

the Sharps, both former London art critics, received a private tour of Fenway Court, the beautiful building and its world class collection.



Fig. 78 Interior Courtyard of Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum which was built in 1903 to house the Gardner collection. The building replicates a fifteenth-century Venetian palace. The Sharps toured the building only a year after its completion and well before the collection achieved its zenith. Photograph by Sean Dungan (2017). Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Courtyard,_Isabella_Stewart_Gardner_Museum,_Boston.jpg#/media/File:Courtyard,_Isabella_Stewart_Gardner_Museum,_Boston.jpg, CC BY 4.0.

Sharp's correspondence before and during the American trip reflects his continuing concern about money, and he managed to meet with editors of some of the country's most prominent magazines with proposals for articles he would not live to write. When he called on Bliss Perry at the *Atlantic* on December 6, he was introduced to Roger Livingston Scaife (1875–1951), one of the Editors and a Director of Messrs. Houghton Mifflin & Co. Following this meeting, he stayed up late to write a detailed letter to Scaife proposing the publication of his "Greek Backgrounds" in two volumes, the first describing Greek remains in Sicily and Cambria and the second those in Greece itself. The editors accepted the proposal for the first of two volumes with the second contingent on the success of the first. Sharp acknowledged the acceptance in a letter from the Thorndike Hotel late Friday night before boarding his ship on Saturday.

On November 28, Sharp wrote to Thomas Mosher from New York to ask if he could come to Boston from Portland, Maine on one of the four days Sharp would be there. Fiona had asked him to meet Mosher, and a letter to Mosher from Fiona on December 28, indicates the meeting took place, on Friday, December 9. Given the close bond Mosher and Fiona had formed through their correspondence and with Mosher unaware he was meeting the author of all the Fiona letters he had received and the Fiona books he had published, and with Sharp conveying proposals for even more Fiona books, one can only wish to have overheard their conversation. Through it, Sharp managed to maintain the secret since Mosher remained in the dark until Sharp died. In addition to conveying directly to Mosher several proposals from Fiona, Sharp during his month in America, proposed articles to the editors of three important periodicals and obtained a commitment from Houghton, Mifflin for one and possibly two books. The Sharp's visit to America was a social and commercial success, but the good feelings that marked their departure soon began to fade.

They boarded the *Romantic* on December 10 during a snowstorm, an ominous start for what became a rough passage. They arrived in Naples in time to travel by train to Bordighera on the Italian Riviera to spend Christmas with John Goodchild. From there Sharp wrote to his friend Murray Gilchrist: "we are back from America (thank God) and are in Italy (thank Him more)... For myself I am crawling out of the suck of a wave whose sweep will I hope be a big one of some months and carry me far." The cold waves of the crossing had so penetrated his consciousness they became a metaphor for his physical and mental condition. The Sharps remained in Bordighera until mid-January when they went south to Rome and rented rooms at the top of a hotel on the Via Sallustiana where they planned to stay for two or three months.