***bonnie dearie*** *by Sighle Meehan*

I held you in the crook between my wrist

and elbow, a hatchling no bigger

than a baby gull, lighter than a kitchen bag of sugar.

I sang to you, old songs from my grandmother

who heard them from her grandmother, a woman

banished from Kintyre

who found a home in Fanad

the how and why of it obscured in family lore;

her face or what she looked like,

the story of her tainted baby,

the way her gaze went back across the sea,

all forgotten

until she came to me when you were born

pre-term, too weak to live,

coaxed milk between your perfect lips

curled your perfect fingers round my breast

called you *bonnie dearie*

told me you were meant to be.