

Opponent's Report

Šárka Homolková, "The Development and Style of the Ossianic Myth" (BA Thesis)

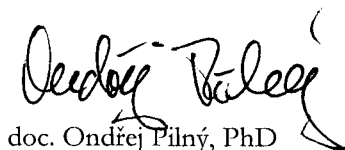
Šárka Homolková's thesis addresses a wide-ranging topic, complicated further by the fact that some of the source materials were written in a language she – like many another scholar – does not speak. Her work provides however a well-researched survey of different variants of the Fenian lore that is presented in a clearly structured manner and with a lucid conclusion. What is of particular value is the engagement with late medieval and early modern Irish texts and the debates surrounding their nature and provenance.

Apart from occasional simplifications and stylistic awkwardness, Ms Homolková's work is persuasive in its general argument. I would like to raise a few points of criticism, and questions nonetheless. It may be argued that the quotation from *Accalam na Senorach* on p. 15 provides little ground for the conclusion that the tales included in the volume were written down in order for the pagan tradition to be preserved in Christian Ireland, since it speaks merely of "entertainment for the lords and commons of later time". Furthermore, the remark on p. 18 concerning the dating of *Macgnímartha Finn* implies that knowledge of seminal Greek and Latin texts arrived in Ireland only with the Normans; however, this is contradicted by the frequent references to the Ancient cultures in Old Irish writing. Finally, the claim that Brooke's work was aimed as an attack on Macpherson (26) is arguably rather exaggerated. As regards the questions – which the candidate may wish to address at the defence – I would like to ask about the term "lay" and its use in the thesis (since a definition is lacking on p. 28). The claim that Macpherson gave rise to "the phenomenon of the so called 'Noble Savage'" (49) also requires some qualification. Finally, the conclusion of the thesis repeats an earlier claim that "the Fenian tales [...] are still being written" (52) – can this be substantiated by evidence?

The largely meticulous approach to the subject is somewhat marred by typographical errors, occasional spelling mistakes (including proper names: "Kellehert" for "Kelleher", "Grantz" or "Gratz" for "Gantz", etc.), and language errors (these are remarkably frequent in section 2.4).

Despite the above, the effort demonstrated in treating a complex topic of the literary history of two language areas is significant and praiseworthy. I recommend the thesis for defence and propose to grade it as "very good".

Vrchlabí, 25 January 2010



doc. Ondřej Pilný, PhD