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Vývoj a styl ossianovského mýtu

The Development and Style of the Ossianic Myth

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I have no objection to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The stories of the Fenian cycle are up to now one of the oldest and most interesting parts of Iro-Scottish mythology originating in written form in the 12th century in Ireland and still being written until now. This cycle incorporates mainly tales about the deeds of the hero Finn mac Cumhaill, who was the leader of the warrior band called fian. The traditional narrator of these stories is Finn's son, the bard of this band named Oisín (in Scotland Ossian). The narrative is originally Irish but it existed for centuries also in Scotland. Thanks to a Scottish writer named James Macpherson, the story, although heavily changed, was made popular world-wide in the second half of the 18th century. Macpherson together with Hugh Blair made up a completely new story using old folk tales from the Fenian cycle. An Ossianic myth and the Ossianic age as such were the creations of Macpherson and Blair; before his publication of the *Poems of Ossian*, there was no single myth about the life of Ossian, his father Fingal etc., only separately existing stories about the deeds and adventures of the Fenian heroes.

The stories originate in Ireland of the 8th century when men of learning created the so called 'synthetic history,' a history of their country in the early centuries AD before the coming of Christianity to the island because the real history of their country was missing. The products of this 'history' were creations of so called cycles of stories based on the genealogies of important families and popular folk tales. One of these cycles which was created at that time was the Fenian cycle with the tales of glorious battles, hunts and feats of the fian, a war band, whose leader was Finn (or Fion) mac Cumhaill. Other heroes of this cycle were Finn's son, the bard Oisín, his son Osgar, Caoilte mac Ronan or Goll mac Morna. The heroes were connected with the third century AD in which they were said to have undergone their major victories, however, Oisín and Caoilte survived until the 5th century to

meat St Patrick and report to him about the fian. Other existing cycles were, for example, the Ulster cycle, the Cycle of the Kings or the Mythological cycle.

The stories of the Fenian cycle were not very popular in Ireland at the beginning judging by the repertoire of the storytellers; they started to become more popular after the 10th century when the stories of other cycles slowly started to decline. The rising popularity of the Fenian tales may be connected with the so called lore of place-names genre which began to be fashionable at that time and was the predominating style of the cycle or with the fact that the stories started to be written down more frequently. However, they began to flourish after the coming of the Normans in the late 12th century. After this time, many new narratives started to be added and the cycle began to develop and transform. New sagas and codices containing Fenian tales were being written and slowly more and more people began to have access to these materials and therefore, the tales started to be passed over also in other forms apart the oral. From these times the stories of Finn and his warriors were better known among the people in Ireland and Scotland, not only to an elite as before. However, it was not until the appearance of James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* in the 1760's that the tales of this cycle, although heavily changed, began to be well known outside the borders of the two countries.

The tales of the Fenian cycle existed in Scotland throughout centuries and were part a of the country's oral tradition, similarly to Ireland. Today we cannot say with certainty when the stories about the fian got to Scotland; if it was already during the existence of the kingdom of Dal Riata from the 7th century or got to Scotland later in the Middle Ages when poets of both countries met. However, in Scotland the Fenian thematic was not treated as a separate unit as in Ireland, it freely mixed with other traditional tales, mainly those of the Ulster cycle. Therefore, there does not exist a clear division between these two cycles as in Ireland where the stories were not only connected with different provinces and adventures but also developed in a different time. In Scotland the Fenian tales existed for a long time only as a part of the oral tradition being passed over in the form of ballads or songs. At the beginning of the 16th century James Macgregor together with his brother Duncan compiled a codex of ballads which they had collected bearing the name *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*, which is until now one of the oldest and most extensive collections of Fenian ballads in Scotland,

however, there are various ballads in this work, not only Fenian ones. Unfortunately, this manuscript stayed unknown for many years.

It was not until the year 1760 when James Macpherson translated or rather paraphrased and published *The Fragments of Ancient Poetry* that the world started to get information about the existence of the bard Ossian, his father Fingal and other members of his army of warriors. The publications of *Fingal* and *Temora* later in the 1760's evoked such interest in the Celtic world in all of Europe and made Ossian and his works well known and loved almost world-wide. When finally Macpherson published his *Poems of Ossian* in 1765, the Ossianic stories suffered a boom and became known and popular almost in every country of Europe and America.

Throughout the centuries the Ossianic thematic has undergone many changes. Despite its long development in Ireland, the traditional tales did not change much, they were only adapted according to the fashion of their time. However, Macpherson changed the style and form dramatically attempting to please his patrons by presenting them with a 'larger epic.' Therefore, he connected many of the then separately existing stories into one and changed their genres from ballads to epic. He also changed the setting of the stories claiming that they were formally of Scottish origin and developed a new character called Fingal, who was modelled on the Irish Finn mac Cumhaill.

The objectives of this thesis are to map the development of the Ossianic 'myth' throughout all its stages, analyse the changes in its style and form from the time when the first tales of the Fenian cycle started to be written down in the 12th century until the publication of James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* in 1765. In this thesis I analyze the major works of this cycle which are accessible and compare their styles and the use of the typical motifs and themes which are characteristic for this cycle. The major aim of this work is to explore the diverse uses of the tales in Ireland and Scotland and to compare their different versions.

The thesis does not focus on the evolution the stories have undergone in Scotland since the tales which existed in both of the countries were very similar. The thesis concentrates only on the development of the Ossianic narratives in Ireland and on the two of the major Scottish works containing Fenian stories – *The Book of the Dean of Lismore* and

Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* as the peak of their development. However, Macpherson's work cannot be thought to be Fenian anymore because the author used the old Fenian stories only as an inspirations for his work and created something completely new out of them; not only changing their setting and genre but transforming them into a Scottish national epic glorifying his homeland. The thesis does not include the development after the publication of Macpherson's poems and the ensuing controversy about their authenticity.

This thesis is divided into four chapters, the first and the last being introduction and conclusion. I chose only four chapters to devote equal space to the development in Ireland as in Scotland. The second chapter focuses on the development of the tales of the Fenian cycle in Ireland from its first stages. The chapter is divided into two parts – the early stages of the evolution of the narrative and the progression after the Norman invasion and later, where it ends with the publication of Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Irish Poetry* as one of the last works with Fenian thematic in Ireland.

The chapter starts with the explanation of the creations of the cycles and maps the early development of the Fenian tales. The second half is devoted to the treatment of the story after the Norman invasion to the island. This part includes also the translations from Irish, namely Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry* which appeared after Macpherson at the end of the 18th century and contained Fenian tales translated from Irish into English. The chapter ends with a comparison of the styles and forms which appeared before and after the conquest and maps also the change in the characterization of the heroes.

The third part is devoted to the development of the Ossianic myth in Scotland starting with *The Book of the Dean of Lismore* and culminating with James Macpherson to whom this chapter is mainly dedicated. In three subchapters I analyze firstly Macpherson's *Fragments* together with their genesis and other early works of the author; in the second *Fingal* and *Temora*, and finally Macpherson's rewriting of the story. Finally, I sum up the major differences between the author and the Fenian tradition. The chapter explains the translator's aims and changes which he made to the narrative and the reasons for the transformation of the original folk tales into a 'larger epic.' Moreover, it also deals with the form and style of the Scottish writings and compares them to their Irish predecessors.

2. IRISH VERSIONS OF THE FENIAN NARRATIVES

Nowadays we cannot tell when the first stories of the Fenian cycle or tales from other cycles started to appear in Ireland. Where we can be sure is only that the heroes of the Fenian tales are connected with the third century AD when they are said to have undergone their glorious adventures. However, Finn's son Oisín and another member of the *fian*, Caoilte, miraculously survived and reappeared in the fifth century to meet the holy cleric St Patrick.¹ Of course Finn, his son, the bard Oisín, and the hero Caoilte are not the only known members of the warrior band. The other main heroes of the group were, for example, Osgar, son of Oisín, Diarmaid or Goll Mac Morna.

The Fenian tales which we know nowadays are products of the 8th century and later, when the Irish scholars tried to reconstruct the ancient past of their country before the arrival of Christianity. One of these people was Cormac mac Cuillenáin, abbot of Cashel, who wrote directly about his 'historical' work:

[...] "The foolish Irish race, forgetful of its history, boasts of incredible or completely fabulous deeds, since it has been careless about committing to writing any of its achievements. Therefore I propose to write down the genealogies of the Irish race: firstly that of the men of Munster, secondly that of the Leinstermen, thirdly that of the *Úí Néill*, and fourthly that of the men of Connacht."²

This 'synthetic history,' as John MacNeill called it, was a product of an attempt to match the history of Ireland to a greater model, to make it similar to the history ancient Greece and Rome and to the biblical history so that also the Irish might boast with their glorious and long

¹ There are many stories explaining who Oisín survived such a long time, eg. "Oisín in the Land of the Ever Young," however, there is no such tale about Caoilte

² Dáibhí Ó Cróinín. *New History of Ireland: Prehistoric and Early Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 182.

past.³ Therefore, they made up a new history of their country by using commonly known folk-tales, sagas and genealogies of important families. Despite their zeal, they mostly invented stories because the authentic accounts of the ancient past were missing. However, they also used commonly known oral material of which Finn and his war band surely was a part.

2.1. The Earliest Development of the Fenian Tales and Their First Written Forms

The first Fenian tales were not written but told by bards or professional poets at gatherings or at the court of their patron. Some of the stories started to be written down from the 10th century but they mostly survived in the oral form for a very long time. Because of their oral character, the stories altered throughout the centuries. Therefore, nowadays we have many variants of one story. There also existed lists of stories or poems which these professional poets had to know which are now a valuable source of information about the taste of their listeners and of what stories existed at the time.

Each bard or poet had to know a certain list of poems which were popular at that time. Murphy claims that in the twelfth century an average poet who recited the old stories had to know around 350 tales,⁴ he had to have the skill to change his inventory when some other stories of heroes became more popular than the other ones. From this inventory of tales there are only 5 titles with the Fenian cycle thematic.⁵ This shows that the Fenian tales were not very well known and popular in the early 12th century. James Carney points out, in his comparison of the Ulster and Fenian cycles, that although the Fenians were represented meagrely in early written texts, they enjoyed a vast popularity throughout Ireland and the Gaelic-speaking Scotland. Moreover, after the Ulster cycle started to decline after the 10th century, the Finn cycle prevailed and has survived until now.⁶

³ Eleanor Knott and Gerard Murphy. *Early Irish Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966) 147.

⁴ Knott and Murphy, 103

⁵ Knott and Murphy, 150-151

⁶ Ó Cróinín, 487-488

Finally, from the 11th century onwards, some of the stories with the Fenian themes started to be written down into codices containing more sagas. A mention of Finn appeared first in a written Latin text already in the 8th or 9th century.⁷ From that time he appeared in short anecdotes and was connected with low themes such as fights, hunts, wooing of maidens etc. Furthermore, another early mention of Finn is found in *The Poem of Fothaid Canainne*, although this work does not represent Finn in the position of the fian leader. There are also the references to Oisín, Finn's son, which are even much older than that and of Caoilte, but the three figures appeared separately until the 10th century.⁸

Of course Finn, although he was the supreme leader of the fian, was not the only concern of the Fenian tales. Most of the tales were told by Oisín and concerned not only with Finn (although the thematic prevailed) but also the genealogies of heroes, lineages, stories about other members of the warrior group such as Osgar, Caoilte or Diarmaid. It may be said that probably a much bigger inventory of stories existed before they started to be recorded because the common practice was that only the best examples were recorded and so survived.

The first major important codex containing five tales about the life of Finn and his adventures was *The Book of Leinster* which appeared in manuscript form in the 12th century. The codex involved five Fenian sagas: *Tochmarc Ailbhe (The Wooing of Ailbhe)*, *Aithed Gráinne re Diarmait (The Elopement of Gráinne with Diarmait)*, *Úath Beinne Étair (The Cave of Howth)*, *Úath Dercce Ferna (The Horror of Derc Ferna)* which is now lost, and *Echtra Fhind i nDerc Ferna (The Adventures of Finn in Derc Ferna)*.⁹ The two first mentioned are important for us, since they introduce Finn mac Cumhaill in a different light than before. It was for the first time that he was introduced as the great leader of the fian equal to the High King of Ireland.

Throughout the centuries, the role of Finn varied; his character was mentioned in *The Poem of Fothad Canainne (Reicne Fothad Canainne)*, among whose warriors Finn (at that time known as Fionn) belonged. This early record introduced Finn not as a leader and great warrior but only as one of many brave men of the fian.¹⁰ This would add information to the

⁷ Knott and Murphy, 148

⁸ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*. Trans. Ann Dooley and Harry Roe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) xiv.

⁹ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, xv

¹⁰ Margaret Kellehert and Philip O'Leary. *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature, Vol. 1 to 1890*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 58.

background of the hero; as a member of the *fian*, he would be of noble birth and still awaiting his inheritance. This was the 10th century and Fothad was the leader of the *fian* and enjoyed the same status which Finn should get two centuries later. In other stories the star of Finn mac Cumhaill slowly started to rise, making him the supreme head of the warrior band that was at the top of the Irish hierarchy and was presented almost in a god-like manner. This was also the case of the most famous Middle Irish texts about the Fenians - *Acallam na Senórach* known as *The Tales of the Elders of Ireland*.

2.1.1. *The Tales of the Elders of Ireland*

Acallam na Senórach, which is the original title of the *Tales*, was written down probably at the end of the 12th or at the beginning of the 13th century ¹¹ and is “the largest literary text surviving from early Ireland and contains the earliest and most comprehensive collection of Fenian stories and poetry.”¹²

The story of the *Tales* is set in the 5th century when St Patrick came to Ireland on his mission to bring Christianity to the island. On his travels around the country he encountered Oisín and Caoilte, the last surviving members of the famous *fian* of Finn mac Cumhaill who miraculously survived until that time, although they are believed to have lived in the 3rd century AD. The *Tales* can be best described as a collection of about 200 stories or anecdotes, how they are sometimes called, describing the order of the old pagan world, bound together by the narrative of the travels of the heroes around the country. As Carney describes this matter:

It is a fusion of ‘native’ and ecclesiastical tradition, and sufficiently sophisticated to show a romantic bias in favour of the old pagan days. The author [who is unknown] was anything but a strict traditionalist: on occasion he took suitable bardic poems or poems from the ecclesiastical tradition of a century or more before his time, cast them back into the pagan period, put them into the mouth of a ‘fenian’ character, and wove about them newly

¹¹ while Dooley and Roe strongly argue for the later date, Murphy holds the time around 1175 for most probable

¹² *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, i

created incidents.¹³

The structure and plot of the *Tales* seems at first very simple: Caoilte after accepting baptism travels together with St Patrick around Ireland and during their journeys explains why the places they visit have such unusual names. This style is known as that of the *Dinnshenchas* or the lore of place-names. After coming to a place, the holy cleric asks his guide about the name of the place and Caoilte names it and explains why it is so called and then he recites a poem with the same theme.

It is certain, however, that the *Tales* are more than a simple tale. They introduce many problems and contrast of the two co-existing cultures. Dooley and Roe talk about the clash of the pagan and Christian world in the *Tales*, the book being an introduction of Christian morality or a praise of Finn as a remote ancestor of a family. The interaction or co-existence of the two cultures is obvious in the *Tales*. Both worlds represented by St Patrick and his followers on one side, standing for the new order of Christianity which is to replace the old world of pagan heroes, represented by Caoilte and Oisín on the other, struggle to survive and integrate into the new world. Both are very different; it almost might be said that they are the opposite of each other. While the Christian world stands for order and laws the dying pagan world is full of traditions, myths, stories about god-like heroes, immortal creatures from the underworld, giants, magic etc.

Furthermore, Roe and Dooley also write about two other possible readings. The first one is the wrong connection of Finn with Níadu Necht, the founder of many Leinster dynasties. Due to this mistake, Finn was for long seen as the poet Find File: “The mistaken identification with Find File may have helped to give rise to one of the most persistent features of the Fenian tradition of Finn: that he is a poet who has visionary knowledge of events.”¹⁴ However, the connection of Finn with the Leinster dynasties might also have a second reason as Dooley and Roe add, namely that the connection of Finn to the Leinster families might have added them on prestige.¹⁵ Another reading may also be that the *Tales* show traces of a book of morals, presenting the Christian doctrine in a familiar and easily understandable way to the average people of Ireland. For example, this appears when Áed

¹³ Ó Cróinín, 490-491

¹⁴ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, xiv

¹⁵ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, xvi

wants to take a second wife but St Patrick orders him not to live in unlawful bigamy and wait until his true wife dies.

As *Acallam na Senórach* reveals many possibilities why it was written, it is also based on various sources. One of the most important sources or inspirations was the lore of place-names genre or mainly its popularity in the tenth to twelfth century. This was a time when most of the stories of the cycles were written in this style because its vast popularity. Roe and Dooley go even further by saying that this genre has “taken on the character of a national onomastics-based legendary.”¹⁶ Another significant influence on the form of the *Tales* was the Patrician hagiography. The narrative is framed by the travelling of the saint around Ireland; this travelling of St Patrick’s in fact binds the whole story together, only Caoilte provides additional information by side stories about the fian. However, both these travels and the encounters with representatives of the old pagan order come from Patrician hagiography.¹⁷

The Tales of the Elders presents a tension between the old pagan world and the new Christian order. However, it is not so that the new order would prevail; it infiltrates the old traditions and tales: while travelling around the country, St Patrick eagerly listens to the old lore about the heroic deeds and finds liking in them. Moreover, he orders his scribe to write them down and so preserve them. Already at the beginning of the *Tales*, St Patrick receives advice from his two guardian angels to write down the stories he hears:

Dear holy cleric, the old warriors tell you no more than a third of their stories because their memories are faulty. Have these stories written down on poets’ tablets in refined language, so that the hearing of them will provide entertainment for the lords and commons of later time.¹⁸

Therefore it may be argued that the reason why the *Tales* were written was the preservation of the traditional pagan stories in the Christian world.

¹⁶ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, ix

¹⁷ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, x

¹⁸ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, 12

2.2. The Development of the Ossianic Stories after the Norman Invasion

After the Norman invasion to Ireland in 1175, much changed on the repertoire of the story-tellers. The Normans brought together with them many new themes and tales about knights and heroes full of chivalric motives and also stories of travels around the world belonging to the common European tradition which soon adapted in Ireland. Moreover, the invasion not only caused the influx of new themes and stories about it meant the decline in popularity of some native ones. However, not to the stories of the Fenian cycle which started to flourish after the invasion took place.

The reason why the stories of the Fenian cycle were easily adopted among the Norman story-telling traditions was, as Murphy explains: “[because it was] a cycle in which the marvellous had always had a place, and in which innovation had become the rule rather than exception.”¹⁹ The stories of the Fenians were full of knight-like heroes living almost under rules of chivalry where honour and law were important, moreover, the repertoire and concern of the stories was very wide. There were stories full of miracles, magic, giants, immortal creatures etc., which were also features which prevailed in the Norman literature. Therefore, the stories of the Fenian cycle became easily accommodated in the Norman world.

The narratives of the Fenians became very popular after the Norman invasion judging by the number of new versions of older stories and also by new tales of the adventures of the Fenian which were written thereafter. However, the records about Finn and his war band started to enjoy a bigger popularity already before the Norman invasion has taken place and also long after it, throughout the whole Middle Ages. However, the existing stories undergone some changes and alternations, mainly in their form and the rising popularity of the bard Oisín who became the narrator of the stories and so replaced Caoilte who was the narrator of the *Tales*.

The year 1175 may be thought as a breaking point in the history of Irish literature. And although the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* were written in the early years after the invasion,

¹⁹ Knott and Murphy, 182

they are still thought to be pre-Norman but moreover, they signify the breaking point in the literary tradition of Ireland:

The author of *Acallam na Senórach* had been educated in and had had his taste in literature formed in pre-Norman Ireland. It is hardly an accident, therefore, that the *Acallam* marks the culminating point of Old and Middle-Irish storytelling; for the Anglo-Norman invasion of 1175 put an end to the kingship of Ireland and the provincial kingships, which had provided the patronage and background suitable for the preservation of the kingly themes of the past age; and in place of these kingships we ultimately find a number of petty lordships, ruled by Gaelic or by Gallicized Norman lords. Irish literature therefore ceased to be so uniquely strange and unparalleled during the Anglo-Norman period (1200 - 1600) as it had been in the Old and Middle-Irish period (700-1200); [...] The Fionn cycle, being a cycle in which marvellous always had a place, and in which innovation had become the rule rather than exception, was easily accommodated to the new spirit.²⁰

The case was that mostly only the native material survived which contained either spectacular or love themes. Moreover, those surviving popular tales mixed with the traditional stories brought by the Normans, so a wide variety of new storytelling started to exist after the invasion.

As written before, the Fenian cycle was one of the few of the Irish cycles which did not suffer significantly after the coming of the Normans, it can be even said that after the invasion, the cycle was more popular than ever and more and more stories about the *fian* appeared and new sagas were written down. Among the new sagas which were produced after the invasion was for example the *Acallam Bec (The Little Colloquy)*, a shortened version of the pre-Norman *Acallam na Senórach*, however, where it came to a shift in the importance of characters. Therefore, *The Little Colloquy* can be said to be one of the first written Fenian sagas which empathizes with Oisín who here became the guide of St Patrick and the reciter of the Fenian lore,²¹ instead of Caoilte who was connected with these activities in the older *Tales*. This shift of roles is quite logical since Oisín was the main bard of the *fian*, therefore, according to the role which bards played, his main 'occupation' was to recite

²⁰ Knott and Murphy, 166

²¹ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*. xli

or sing the lores and to remember them; Caoilte was only one of many warriors, therefore, the role of him reciting the poems is quite unusual.

Another significant source from the early post-Norman Ireland is *Macgnímartha Finn* (*The Boyhood Deeds of Finn*), by some thought to be written in the same time as the *Tales*, so probably the 13th century or late 12th century.²² However, the date of its writing was probably after the invasion since the *Deeds* were influenced by the ancient Latin tales about Ulysses or Troy commonly known in Medieval Europe. This book was concerned with the early life of Finn mac Cumhaill and as Murphy sums it up:

Some twelfth century man of learning put together a poorly constructed but valuable account of how Fionn was reared as a posthumous child in the forest and, having won his name Fionn (The Fair One), slew his opponent Aodh (Fire) with a specially provided spear,” which as he writes was a commonly known tale which was a part of the oral tradition of the country.²³

Cath Fionntrágha (*The Battle of Ventry*) is one of the most known sagas of the Fenian cycle describing the major battle which the fian fought. Its editor, Cecile O’Rahilly dates the manuscript to the 15th century,²⁴ however, the story is much older because an allusion to this event is mentioned already in the *Tales* (where it is described as the Battle of the Fair Shore, p.24); that shows that the story of *The Battle of Ventry* existed long before it was written down and was commonly known as a part of the oral tradition. Also *The Chase of Síd na mBan Finn* and *Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (*The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne*) are dated to the 15th century. The first is a prose typical for containing an incomplete version of the death-tale of Finn. The second was already known at the turn of the millennium and later short similar stories appeared which shows that this story is much older, although it was firstly written down in the 15th century.²⁵ Nowadays, this is one of the most famous Fenian tales incorporating the popular Norman innovations as a passionate love-story and tale of revenge in one. Around the year 1500 another version of the *Little Colloquy* known as *Agallamh na Seanórach* (*The Colloquy of the Ancients*) appeared. *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature* mentions another version of the *Acallam* from around 1400:

²² *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, xli

²³ Knott and Murphy, 156

²⁴ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*. xli

²⁵ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, xli

by an author who essentially stitched together the two Late Middle Irish versions, adding a few extra poems and stories and slightly modernising the language in the process. Like the shorter of the two Late Middle Irish versions on which it is based, this new *Agallamh Déanach (Late Agallamh)* is structured primarily on the dialogue between St Patrick and Oisín, a theme which becomes quite dominant in the later manuscript and folk Fenian lays.²⁶ The most important Irish manuscript containing Fenian tales after *The Tales of the Elders* was compiled in 1626 or 1627²⁷ bearing the name *Duanaire Finn (The Poem Book of Finn)* (More about the compilation in the next chapter which is dedicated to it).

These were only the most important among the stories which were produced in Ireland after the Norman invasion; however, this does not mean that these stories were the only ones. The majority of tales with the Fenian thematic produced in this time were modelled on the popular French genre of the *roman d'aventure* and were produced probably in the 15th century or later. Murphy gives quite long list of these stories which he classifies under the themes of battles in far lands or recovering of women. On his list we can find titles as *Tóraigheacht Taise Taoibhghile (The Pursuit of the Gentle White-sided Lady)*, *Tóraigheacht Shaidhbhe Inghine Eóghain Óig (The Rescue of Sadhbh Daughter of Young Eóghan)*, *Eachtra Iollainn Iolchrothaigh Mheic Ríogh na hEasbáinne (The Adventures of Many-beautied Iollan son of the King of Spain)* or *Eachtra Bhodaigh an Chóta Lachtna (The Adventures of the Churl with the Grey Coat)*.²⁸

It is also necessary to mention that it is not easy to correctly assign dates to the Fenian tales produced after the Norman invasion. That is why most of the sources differ in the dates when the stories were firstly written down. The reason for this problematic periodization, as Murphy points out, was the fact that many scribes used more modern or, on the other hand, archaic forms of the language to assign an air of antiquity to their work. Another reason is that the vast majority of the stories is preserved only in much more modern manuscripts usually from the 17th century onwards, when Modern Irish was already used.²⁹

²⁶ Kellehert and O'Leary, 116

²⁷ here again Murphy differs from Dooley and Roe, who state the date 1626, while Murphy 1627, however most of the sources use the date 1627

²⁸ Knott and Murphy, 183

²⁹ Knott and Murphy, 182

2.2.1. *The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne*

Tóruigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne is and was one of the most popular and most well known tales of the Fenian cycle. It is known under many titles, for example *Diarmaid* (there are various spellings of this name) and *Gráinne* or *The Elopement of Gráinne with Diarmaid*. It is a complex and lengthy story, describing the elopement of Gráinne with her lover Diarmaid and Finn's chase after them.

The Pursuit is full of strong feelings, not only of passionate love which Gráinne feels for Diarmaid but also with hatred that Finn feels towards Diarmaid. This hatred results in many conflict situations among the most prominent members of the (until that time harmonically working) *fian*, for example when Osgar is prevented by his father Oisín from murdering his grand-father after his refusal to help Diarmaid; Oisín's, Osgar's, Caoilte's and Mac Lughach's revolt towards Finn when they return to cover the body of Diarmaid with their mantles; Gráinne's discovery of the death of her husband etc.³⁰ The author of this tale greatly mastered his task by describing these strong emotions of the heroes, which was until this time unthinkable. Therefore, *The Pursuit* is one of the few Fenian tales which represents Finn as a real human being who is not good all the time but also hates somebody and is able to be cruel and unjust and take revenge on his enemy.

Despite these expressions of emotions, the structure of the story is quite simple, telling a tale of the flight of the two lovers and their pursuit by Finn. However:

A good proportion of it is taken up by the relation of in-tales, or stories told by characters. [...] Thus the *Tóruigheacht* is similar to the *Acallam* in its use of relatively simple narrative as a frame on which to hang numerous others.³¹

The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne, although the oldest written form of the whole tale is connected with the 14th or 15th century,³² and the oldest surviving manuscript comes from the half of the 17th century, the story is surely much older than that, however, never

³⁰ Kellehert and O'Leary, 119

³¹ Kellehert and O'Leary, 120

³² here various sources work with different dates, while Murphy works with the 14th century as the oldest publishing time of the whole tale of *The Pursuit*, Dooley and Roe have timed it to the 15th century

appeared as a whole story. A mention of Gráinne appears already in the tale *Wooing of Ailbhe*, one of the first stories of the Fenian cycle appearing already in *The Book of Leinster*, where Gráinne is mentioned as an older sister of Ailbhe and a daughter of Cormac, who had caused a quarrel between Finn and Cormac and enmity between them: “The cause of the quarrel,” we are told, “was that Gráinne had given her hatred to Fionn and had given her love to Diarmaid ua Duibhne.”³³ Murphy adds:

Tochmarc Ailbe therefore supposes the knowledge of the story of Diarmaid and Gráinne, [...]. No early versions of this story has been preserved, but the Middle Irish commentary on *Amra Choluim Chille (The Glories of Colum Cille)* cites a ninth- or tenth-century stanza supposed to have been spoken by ‘Gráinne the daughter of Cormac to Fionn,’ which doubtless originally formed parts of it:

There is one
On whom I should gladly gaze,
For whom I would give the bright world,
All of it, all of it, though it would be an unequal bargain.

References such as this to incidents in the story enable us to be certain that the framework [...] is ancient, while the fact that the dolmens all over Ireland are known as ‘the bed of Diarmaid and Gráinne,’ and that many landmarks are connected with the lovers, proves its popularity.³⁴

Also the *Acallam* contains information of a part of the story, namely Diarmaid’s death by the boar. Because the earlier mentions of the story are either of Gráinne’s refusal of Finn or the tragic death of Diarmaid, many scholars argue about the focus of the story and also if it was not made of two previously different stories:

Scholars vary in their identification of the main focus of the tale, with some seeing it as a tragedy of ‘a young girl betrothed to an old man and a conflict between passion and duty on the part of the lover,’ and the others seeing the focus of the tale on Diarmaid and his life-story. Based on the earlier evidence, one can suggest that there were originally two distinct sources of traditions, one telling of Gráinne’s betrothal to Fionn and her elopement with Diarmaid, the other concerned with the life story and *oidheadh* or violent death of

³³ Knott and Murphy, 152

³⁴ Knott and Murphy, 152

Diarmaid. These two sources were then brought together, possibly for the first time, by the fourteenth-century author of the *Tóruigheacht*.³⁵

The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne is quite an unusual Fenian tale. Although it is similar in its form to the *Acallam*, presenting a frame narrative with many side stories, the story of the lovers is fluent and the various stories present only more information about the past events and explain the situations. Therefore, they are also linked to their story. It also incorporated the fashionable Norman motives as a love-story, adventure story full of magic, otherworldly creatures or giants. It is also a story of revolt against the order of things. Furthermore, the tale is different in the portrayal of the fian heroes, mostly Finn who is shown as an old weak man who is envious, afraid of losing a battle and has no pity.

2.2.2. *Duanaire Finn*

The Poem Book of Finn (sometimes referred to as *The Book of the Lays of Fionn*) is nowadays one of the most important materials about the Fenian cycle and one of the biggest sources of Fenian ballads. *Duanaire Finn* was written in Gaelic in 1627³⁶ by Aodh O'Doherty for Captain Sorley McDonald of Antrim, an Irish nobleman living in exile after he fled to the Continent in the so called 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607.

Aodh O'Doherty collected and wrote down for his patron a compilation of sixty-nine Fenian ballads of various age. The oldest come from the 12th century, other ones are much more modern.³⁷ The ballads not only vary in their age but also in their style, some are dialogue poems of various moods (sometimes play-like, angry or even agitating), some are stories told among the Fenian heroes or by the heroes (mostly Oisín) to St Patrick, or ballads with a religious context. The religious context is very important, because the majority of the ballads either allude to Christianity, laments over the hard times in Christendom or presents the possibility of heaven for some of the members of the fian.

³⁵ Kellehert and O'Leary, 121

³⁶ Here Murphy again differs from Dooley and Roe. Murphy claims that the *Duanaire* was written in 1627, however Dooley and Roe argue for the year 1626

³⁷ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*. xli

Most of the ballads are similar to the stories found in the *Acallam*: they explain events and the names, but this time they are mostly not lores on place-names but odes on famous heroes of the fian and their deeds. Often, the ballads tell a story about an event which occurred to the fian, on the other hand, there are also many ballads which only list names and explain who was who in the Fenian hierarchy.

Moreover, some of the poems are characteristic by a sudden change of style or topic. Some ballads start, for example, explaining who were the sons of Finn and later the ballad turns to a story of their deeds; or a ballad starts as almost a 'broomstick' poem in which St Patrick agitates the pagans to find their way to the true belief or they will go to hell and then turns to a humble description of Christianity. A ballad which presents quite an ambiguous view on Catholicism is the ballad LIII - "The Bell of Druim Deirg:"

The note of a bell have I heard in Druim
Deirg where the Fian were wont to hunt :
never before did I hear the sound of a bell
in a hunting forest.

[...]

Who is this miserable cleric to the west,
who rings his little bell violently, who does
not hearken to the cry of the hounds in the
glen beside him?

I have seen men in the plain, who would not
listen to the sound of thy bell, and who would
leave thee and all thy clerics dead together.

I would sooner at rising time hear grouse
on mountain peaks than the voice of the
cleric indoors bleating like a sheep or a
goat.

[...]

« Oisín, tell it, and leave us not ashamed :
what would they do to me for ringing this

little bell ? »

I truly give my word, and I swear by the
soul of my king that he would strike thy
bell on thy head till thou wert lifeless.

[...]

Had Fionn, the warrior, heard the sound
of thy little bell, cleric, he would assured-
ly have gone to meet you and you would
not have been able (?) to escape.

[...]

Ah me! it is torture to my heart to part
from the slope of Maonmhagh and from
those generous heroes, from my fian and my
good poets.

I am Oisín, Fionn's good son : I believe in
the God above, Tailgeann. Though to-
night I am without fian, without wealth,
the bell's note gives me pain.³⁸

This is an example of a religious ballad found in the compilation which presents a negative view on Christianity. Oisín clearly states that he is pagan and that if the fian caught the cleric, they would kill him and destroy the church bells. However, there are also many poems which present Oisín after baptism. The focus of other religious ballads is mostly the persuasion of Oisín to turn to the true faith or questions which Oisín raises after his accepting baptism.

The ballads in *Duanaire Finn* do not tell any story and are no episodes; every ballad has a different focus and therefore has to be treated separately, although various poems are very similar or are about a similar topic, mostly Patrick's persuasions of Oisín to accept Christianity or Oisín's plea for heaven for his friends. The saint varies in his moods,

³⁸ Gerard Murphy, ed. "Duanaire Finn: The Book of the Lays of Fionn." 2 June 2008. *Library Online*. 24 Sep 2009. <www.archive.org/stream/duanairefinnbook28murpuoft/duanairefinnbook28murpuoft_djvu.txt>

sometimes he is presented, as usual, as the nice and humble man who tries to help the people by bringing them to Christianity and so helps their soul. However, the collection involves also ballads where the saint appears in quite an unusual light, almost as a mean threatening man who leaves the people no other possibility than accepting the new religion or eternal damnation. Patrick is also presented, on one hand, as a man sometimes liking to listen to the stories of the heroic deeds of the *fian* and on the other hand, as a hater of them because they spent more time in hunting and thinking about themselves and their life than on God. Oisín is presented as an old weak man in his last days, who lets Patrick persuade himself to turn to Christianity and who tries very hard to answer all questions and who, moreover, he is very sad about the fact that he is the last surviving member of the *fian*. He tries to help his fellow warriors by securing a blessing for them or a place in heaven by the help of Patrick, but the saint is merciless towards him and always refuses:

[...] Oísín: Patrick, ask from your God, I pray you, that Fionn of the Fiana and his children reach Heaven. Make prayer for the prince : never in my time did I hear of one to equal him.

Patrick : I will not seek Heaven for Fionn, unpleasant man against whom my anger has arisen; for what he loved in his day was to be in a glen amid the clamour of the chase. [...]³⁹

The Poem Book, although compiled quite late, is a good example of Fenian lays. It presents the former characters that appeared in the early Fenian stories in a completely different light: Oisín is presented not as the wise bard whose age and wisdom should be admired but an old naïve dying man; Finn is described by the saint as a villain who deserves nothing but hell. St Patrick's role is most ambiguous, in some of the ballads he appears in his traditional role as the admirer and curious listener of the Fenian lore, but he is also presented as someone who urges and sometimes even threatens the pagan heroes to accept the true faith.

³⁹ Murphy. *Duanaire Finn*

2.3. Translations form Irish

During the 18th century translations from Gaelic into English started to flourish. Among the translators who contributed to this popular wave was Charlotte Brooke with her *Reliques of Irish Poetry* published in 1789. In her work she not only collected and translated the old traditional Irish folk-tales of various topics, but moreover due to her careful division and explanation of the works created a very important source of Irish popular tales. As MacCraith writes:

Having set out her aims in an extended preface, Brooke divides her text into six sections, Heroic Poems, Odes, Elegies, Songs, translations of the originals and, finally, an original Irish Tale. Each item is preceded by an advertisement which deals with questions of sources and dating in so far as that is possible. [...] It is also worth noting that only the first two sections, those of the heroic poems and odes, deal with Ossianic material.⁴⁰

Her work may be interpreted as a reaction on James Macpherson's *Poems* which were published before. Brooke took amiss from Macpherson for the misuse of the original material and for pilfering it from Gaelic Ireland.⁴¹ As Cronin states, the publication of *The Poems* and Macpherson's claim that the Fenian stories were of Scottish origin, caused a new wave of popularity of Irish-written literature, however, not many in that time spoke the language.⁴² Therefore, Brooke's detailed explanations and dating of the stories not only brought her work closer to the readers and made it more understandable but was also aimed as an attack on Macpherson. However, although Brooke tried to prove that the Fenian stories were originally Irish and even used in her book two tales which Macpherson had used, she never directly wrote about the controversy nor attacked the Scottish writer for his misuse of the Irish literary tradition.⁴³ Brooke's work aimed more to propagate the Irish literature in the English speaking world than to create another controversy. However, by adding of the original Gaelic

⁴⁰ Mícheál MacCraith. "Charlotte Brooke and James Macpherson." *Litteraria Pragensia*, vol 10 / 2000: 9

⁴¹ MacCraith, Charlotte Brooke and James Macpherson 10

⁴² Michael Cronin. *Translating Ireland: Translation, Languages, Cultures* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996) 98.

⁴³ Clare O'Halloran. "Irish Re-Creation of the Gaelic Past: The Challenge of Macpherson's Ossian." *The Past and Present*, No 124. Aug. 1989. JSTOR. 19th Apr 2009. <www.jstor.org/stable/650893>

material she added to the authenticity of her work and brought out the true form of the stories which were made so popular by Macpherson.

2.4. Comparison of the Early and Late Irish Forms of the Fenian Narratives

The early Fenian tales vary in many aspects from those written after the Norman invasion and later. The stories have undergone a great change throughout the centuries. The biggest changes took part in the style of the tales and the representation of heroes. Further on, after the Norman invasion, the Fenian tales became more popular than ever and started to flourish. Later on, the stories also started to be more frequently written down and the written form started to prevail upon the oral one.

The early Fenian tales are multi-genre works, they are not clearly written in only one genre, although some were used more often. The stories, sagas and first produced manuscripts contained a narration of events, lays, lore on place-names (Dinnshenchas) combined with poems and songs. The lore of place-names is typical for the style of the early Fenian tales, however, it is not the only genre appearing in them and not probably even the style of the earliest sagas which very epic. The lore of the place-names genre offers explanations why places bear their names. They are connected with an event, usually a famous battle of the *fian*, of a hunt, death of a hero etc. The Dinnshenchas style flourished in Ireland from the tenth to twelfth century and was winning on popularity. This time is sometimes called as the lore of place-names revolution. Therefore, it comes hand in hand that from the tenth century onwards the Fenian tales which were written in this style started to be so popular.⁴⁴ To illustrate this on an example from the *Tales*, the lore goes like this: mostly St Patrick or it might be someone else asks Caoilte for the reason a place bears its name and he explains it and recites a poem:

‘My dear Caílte,’ said Patrick, ‘why is the hill on which we stand called Fair Hill?’ ‘I shall tell you the truth,’ said Caílte, ‘It was from here that we went, in our three battalions, to fight the Battle of the Fair Shore [Ventry]. Our

⁴⁴ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, xv

javelins had been brought to us, and magic rings put on their shafts, when Finn looked about the hill and said: ‘This is a lovely hill.’ ‘And what better name,’ said his men, ‘could it have than Fair Hill?’ Cailte then recited the following verse:

‘O high and pleasant hill, where once the *Fianna* came;
Renowned and spacious campsite, filled with fine young men.

‘This was our portion, on the height of the green;
Shiny whitethorn berries, nuts from the headland’s hazels.

‘Birds from the sheltering oaks, were roasted by the *Fian*,
Spotted martens from *Berramain*, small nests from the heights. [...]’⁴⁵

The lore of place-names is, however, not the only genre appearing in the early Fenian tales, although they are the prevailing one. Already in the *Book of Leinster* a new type of narrative appeared which later became to be associated primarily with the Fenian cycle. This new genre is called *laoidh* (pl. *laoithe*), lay in English. The Fenian lays are therefore known as *Laoithe Fianuigheachta*. However, this genre, although at its time typical for the Fenian stories, does not appear much in the *Tales*. There are only a few instances where the author of the story used this form, for example in the tale about Cnú Deróil, Finn’s dwarf musician.⁴⁶ This style of the Fenian lays or ballads started to flourish after the 12th century and in the later periods became the predominating genre of the Fenian cycle.

Usually the lays in the older pieces only repeat the same argument as the prose preceding them and so do not contribute to the development of the story. Probably this element comes from the time when the stories were listened to and the people who recited the poems needed to repeat the main argument so that everybody from the uneducated audience would have understood it. Another common feature of the early Irish stories was the insertion of a so called speech poem, which continues with the narration, however, in the form of verse. This style was not very common in the early literature but was used more later in the ballads and was known as the dialogue poems.

⁴⁵ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, 24

⁴⁶ The example appears in *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* on pages 21-22

One of the main features of the early style of the Fenian tales is blending of prose and verse:

One of the most common explanations for this, is that the verse was added to the original tale, another that the verse is the older part, the prose being added to make a framework for the verse, but a general view of some of the original romances appear to lead to a very different conclusion. It seems much more probable that the Irish authors deliberately chose a method of making their work at once literary and suited to please a popular audience; they told their stories in plain prose, adding to them verse, possibly chanted by the reciters of the stories, so that while the prose told the story in a simple language, the emotions of pity, martial adorn, and the like were awakened by the verse. They did not use the epic form, although their knowledge of the classical literature must have made them familiar with it; the Irish epic form is Romance. They had, besides the prose and what may be called the 'regular' verse, a third form, that of *Rose*, or as it is sometimes called rhetoric, which is a very irregular form of verse. Sometimes it rhymes, but most of them not; the lines are of varying length, and to scan them is often very difficult, an alliteration taking the place of scansion in many cases. The rhetoric does not in general develop the story nor take the form of description, it usually consists of songs of triumph, challenges, prophecies, and exhortations, though it is sometimes used for other purposes.⁴⁷

One of the differences between the early and late Fenian tales is in the depiction of the heroes as Finn, Oisín or Caoilte. In the old stories they were not depicted merely as normal human beings but almost as immortals having incredible strength, wisdom and partly magical powers which helped them to survive for two centuries. As J. Grantz writes: "Many of the characters are partially euhemerized gods - that is, they are gods in the process of becoming ordinary mortals - so that again, is not easy to tell divine from human."⁴⁸ James Carney explains well how it happened that these heroes started to be seen as gods:

In pagan Ireland, as in all primitive societies, we may say with certainty that there existed tales of gods, religious myths that in some way gave sanction to and controlled the mores of society. With the advent of Christianity, and the

⁴⁷ *Heroic Romances of Ireland, Vol. 1.* trans. A.H. Leahy (London: Balantyne, Hanson & Co, 1905) x.

⁴⁸ *Early Irish Myths and Sagas.* trans. Jeffrey Gratz (London: Clays Ltd, 1981) 2.

gradual overthrow of pagan belief, many of these ancient gods [...] were euhemerized: that is, they were presented as historical characters, and there would [...] have been considerable modification in the stories related to them.⁴⁹

We can see this already at the very beginning of the *Tales* when St Patrick firstly encounters Caoilte and his retinue, the author of the *Tales* gives an incredible description of the heroes: “The priest kept staring in astonishment at these warriors, for the tallest of the clerics came only to the waist or the shoulder-tops of these great men.”⁵⁰ However, it is difficult to say which of the heroes have been previously gods or to state that all the famous legendary Irish heroes were gods in pre-Christian times.

All in all, the characterization changed dramatically in the time after the Norman invasion and therefore, in *The Pursuit* and *The Poem Book* an almost new Finn appears. He is described in a more human-like way, as man who has feelings which not always have to be noble. He is also an envious, evil and sometimes even unjust man who has no forgiveness. Such a Finn appeared also in the *Pursuit* from where this example of Finn’s ennobled behaviour comes. In this scene Finn denies helping the dying Diarmaid and so fulfils his revenge upon him:

“It likes me well to see thee in that plight, O Diarmuid,” said Finn, “and I grieve that all the woman of Erin are not now gazing upon thee: for thy excellent beauty is turned to ugliness, and thy choice form to deformity.”

“Nevertheless it is thy power to heal me, O Finn,” said Diarmuid, “if it were thy pleasure to do so.”

“How should I heal thee?” said Finn.

“Easily,” said Diarmuid, “for when thou didst get the noble precious gift of dividing at the Boyne, it was granted thee that to whomsoever thou should give a drink from the palms of thy hands he should after be young, fresh, and sound from any sickness he might have had at that time.”

“Thou hast not deserved of me that I should give thee that drink,” said Finn.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Knott and Murphy, 13-14

⁵⁰ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, 5

⁵¹ “Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne.” *Celtic Literature Collective*. Mary Jones. 28 May 2008
< www.maryjones.us/ctexts/f15.html >

Another innovation is that the *Duanaire Finn* contains information that the heroes of the *fian* could be heavily wounded by their enemies and had to rest to let their wounds cure. This fact shows that the *fian* members later lost their god-like status. As written previously, in the *Tales* the heroes appeared as euphemized gods. Also the portrayals of Oisín and St Patrick have changed in the latter times. In *Duanaire Finn* we find a Patrick whose role is quite ambiguous. In some ballads he is the nice man who loves to listen to the old Fenian stories and in others he appears as a person hating the *fian*, most of all Finn, who threatens the pagans to accept Christianity etc. Oisín's role changed also dramatically. He lost his status of the wise bard who is admired by all for his knowledge and is presented as an old dying man in his last days, who is, moreover, very naïve.

The post-Norman era brought also a change of the narrator. While in *The Tales* it was Caoilte who explained everything to St Patrick, later the role of Oisín increased. Already in the *Little Colloquy* he replaced the former hero. In *Duanaire Finn* there are various speakers, mostly it is Oisín, although we cannot be sure who the actual narrator of some ballads is, however, some of the ballads are told by Caoilte or other heroes and the dialogue poems have various speakers. Caoilte's role as a whole diminished in the later times and his character almost disappeared. The addressee stays in most of the examples the holy cleric.

Interesting are the dialogue poems between St Patrick and the aged Oisín who is before or soon after accepting Christianity. It seems as if the old man did not understand well the new religion and his concern in the most of these religiously oriented ballads is the question of heaven, if he will meet there with his father and the rest of the *fian*:

[...] Oisín: Patrick, ask from your God, I pray you, that Fionn
of the Fiana and his children reach Heaven. Make
prayer for the prince : never in my time did I
hear of one to equal him.

Patrick : I will not seek Heaven for Fionn, unpleasant man
against whom my anger has arisen ; for what he
loved in his day was to be in a glen amid the clam-
our of the chase.

Oisín : If you had been along with the Fian, clerk of the clergy and the bells, you would have paid no heed to God, but to giving due treatment to learned men and scholars.

Patrick : I would not desert the Son of the Living God for all who have come in the flesh, east or west. Oisín of weak judgement (?), your rewarding of learned men has ended badly for you. [...] ⁵²

This example also shows the various attitudes of the saint and in the first part presents him negatively as an uncompromising man who hates the Fian and at the end again Patrick returns almost back to his traditional role as the savior of souls. This ballad not only presents the saint as a hater of Finn (although in another poem he admires him as already in the next one where almost at the beginning Patrick states: “Oisín, I love the sound of your voice, and a blessing/ to Finn’s soul too”⁵³) but also as a man who is able to convince someone to turn to what he likes. Through the collection we can witness that Oisín has finally accepted baptism, however, still laments over the past pagan times and states if the Fian were alive he would have never turned to Christianity. Therefore, most of the ballads have a melancholic tone.

Another innovation is the disharmonious situation among the Fian. In *The Pursuit* we can witness how the heroes break their code of manners and disobey their leader’s orders. In many parts of the story Osgar and Oisín act against the will of Finn by helping Diarmaid, who became the leader’s enemy. Moreover, in one part Osgar even goes so far that he almost kills his grand-father if Oisín did not prevent him from doing it. Also in *Duanaire Finn* there are accounts of disputes and fights among the members of the war-band. The quarrels are not only to be found between the Fian members but also between Finn and the High King of Ireland, who was in the previous times presented as the patron of the band. In the ballad called “The Battle of Gabhair” the quarrels even go so far that the Fian fought the armies of the Irish king and kill him.

The post-Norman time also brought innovations to the life of the heroes. In many of the ballads there are information how the heroes had their own residences (in *The Tales* it

⁵² Murphy. *Duanaire Finn* LVII

⁵³ Murphy. *Duanaire Finn* LVIII

was only Finn who had his seat in Almu, however, the fian mostly lived among the woods), had servants and, further on, the fian starts to resemble a group of medieval knights who have richly decorated garments, golden shields and helmets, and even ranks among them are made. Another innovation, which was probably inspired by the popular travel-books, was that the fian started to leave the borders of the British Isles and began their adventures in Scandinavian countries, Spain, France, Greece or even far India.

The new post-Norman books with the Fenian thematic are very different from *The Tales of the Elders*. Not only the style of the writings changed, but also the characterisation. The largest change can be clearly seen in the ambiguous roles of St Patrick and Finn who lost their almost god-like chaste manners and are being represented with all their moods and feelings, sometimes in a very negative light. The Fenian tales were also influenced by the knightly culture and the heroes start to appear more as knights than the ancient warriors. One of the most important changes is the shift from oral to written form of the narrative. More stories of the fian started to be written down and then read, some were even firstly invented by the writers and then became a part of the oral tradition.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE OSSIANIC TALES IN SCOTLAND

The stories of the Fenian cycle have been known in Scotland for centuries. We do not know exactly when these tales got from Ireland to Scotland; however, we can say that they gained fame worldwide in Scotland and not in their home country. The great popularity of the stories

is attributed to James Macpherson and his work *The Poems of Ossian* published in the second half of the 18th century.

It was not only James Macpherson in Scotland who contributed to the popularization of the tales about Finn and the *fian*. In the early 16th century another manuscript bearing the name *The Book of the Dean of Lismore* was published by James and Duncan Macgregor. This anthology containing almost three-hundred Gaelic ballads (mostly of Irish origin) comprises also of Fenian ones. The reason why the biggest number of ballads in this compilation is of Irish provenance although they were part of the Scottish oral tradition is the fact that, as Murphy writes: “Till the late seventeenth century the Gaelic literature of these two countries had not been differentiated,”⁵⁴ therefore almost the same inventory of the stories existed in both of the countries for centuries and changes and alternations adopted only slowly.

The Macgregor’s’ compilation relies still heavily on the Irish oral tradition, however, Macpherson’s *Poems*, although they were inspired by the Dean’s manuscript, created a completely different picture of the old Gaelic world.

3.1. *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*

The Book of the Dean of Lismore was compiled by James Macgregor, the Dean of Lismore, and his brother Duncan in Fortingall in the first half of the 16th century. *The Book* is multi-lingual; it contains poems written in Scots, Latin, vernacular Gaelic and ‘Classical’ Gaelic, which was a formalised version of the earlier. All the four languages, which at that time existed in Scotland, are contained in the manuscript.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the book contains also many genres, for example religious ballads, praise poetry, genealogies, bardic poems, elegies, heroic ballads, which are mostly Fenian or of the Ulster cycle; satires etc. The manuscript involves Gaelic ballads from various times, usually dating from c. 1200 to 1520, some of these were unknown until the time of the publication of the manuscript.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Knott and Murphy, 187

⁵⁵ Owen Flandy and Murray Pittock, eds. *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature, Vol. 1.* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) 212.

⁵⁶ Flandy and Pittock, 209

The Book of the Dean of Lismore is special in many ways, not only for its wide range of themes and the use of four languages. Thanks to the Macgregors many old stories which would probably be lost were preserved, moreover, the manuscript contains an incredible collection of bardic poetry of Ireland and Scotland. Although the Irish naturally dominates, we can find there eighty-eight items of Scottish interest, not counting heroic ballads.⁵⁷ However, there are different reasons which make the manuscript unique:

The Dean's MS differs from all the other MS. in that collection in two essential particulars. It is not, like the other MSS., written in what is called the Irish character, but in the current Roman character of the early part of the sixteenth century; and the language is not written in the orthography used in writing Irish, [...] but in a peculiar kind of phonetic orthography as they are pronounced. The peculiar orthography employed is, however, is evidently not the mere attempt of a person ignorant of the proper orthography to write the words in English letters in an arbitrary manner, so as to present, as nearly as possible, the sound of the words as they struck in his ears when repeated to him, but bears evident marks of having been a regular and known system of orthography, which, although we have few specimens of it left, may not the less have once prevailed in that parts of the Highlands more removed from the influence of Irish teaching.⁵⁸

This orthography is very unique and also complicated. It is a phonological spelling of what the compilers heard when they were listening to the stories which were recited to them. This special orthography displays the usage of various languages and dialects in Scotland, which is something which makes the ballads almost unreadable, because the same words appear with various spelling.

What is important for our purpose, are the Fenian ballads contained in the compilation. However, the Ossianic thematic is only minor in the *Book* and from the almost three-hundred poems there are only twenty-eight with Fenian thematic. Most of the ballads have an unknown author, but from the others, the authorship is mostly ascribed to Ossian; other narrators are Caoilte, Fergus the Bard, Allan M'Rory (or Rorie), Gilliecallum M' an Olave, Blind O'Cloan, Connal Cearnach M'Edirskeol, who contributed by one or two poem each.

⁵⁷ Derrick Thomson. *An Introduction to Gaelic Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990) 20.

⁵⁸ James Macgregor. *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*. Ed. Thomas M'Lauchan (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1862) vii-viii

Despite so few ballads connected with the Fenian cycle:

[...] the *Book* counts as an early source for the narrative ballads about the *fian*, which mostly appear in much later manuscript sources. In form, these ballads share with the bardic eulogy the syllabic quatrains of the *dán*-metres; however, the metrical rules for *fianaigheacht* are less strict than those for the official praise poetry. The ‘standard’ Fenian ballad tends to be about a hunt or an expedition, a battle or a quest; and there are also ballads recounting famous episodes from the Fenian literary cycle [...]. Additionally, there are numerous examples of ballads founded on the literary conceit which underpins *Agallamh na Seanórach*, the meeting of the aged Oiséan, last survivor of the *fian*, with Patrick, harbinger of the post-heroic Christian age, which leads to Oiséan telling Patrick, and hence posterity, about the pre-history of Ireland and the musing of the past times.⁵⁹

Unambiguously, the most important Fenian ballad in the compilation is “The Battle of Ventry,” the description of the *fian*’s most famous battle which appears firstly in written form in this manuscript.

The majority of the ballads contained in the compilation is of Irish origin and appeared in earlier Irish texts (mostly *Duanaire Finn*). However, what is an important innovation of the *Book*, which was used in later works, mainly by James Macpherson, was the modernized or changed spelling characteristic for the Fenian thematic in Scotland. Mostly the spelling of names was changed in this manuscript - the Irish Oisín became Ossian, the *fian* changed to the *Feine*, however, what is unusual that the names of other who heroes, Caoilte and Finn stayed the same. Another important change was the co-existence and mixing of the thematic of the Ulster and Fenian Cycle. The heroes of both cycles start to appear side by side, their adventures met and there was no longer a clear distinction between them as it was in Ireland.

The Book of the Dean of Lismore is thought to be one of the most important Scottish manuscripts because it preserves almost three-hundred Gaelic poems which would have probably been lost if the manuscript was not written. It also presents many innovations, among which the usage of an orthography resembling the spoken word and the mix of the Ulster and Fenian cycle are most important.

⁵⁹ Flandy and Pittock, 223

3.2. James Macpherson

James Macpherson became one of the most popular, if not the most popular, and influential writers of the second half of the 18th century. His *Poems of Ossian* became known all over Europe and caused a revived interest for the ancient past. However, Macpherson started his career long before Ossian. He knew the Ossianic poetry from the times he lived among his clansmen in the Highlands and collected the ancient Gaelic poetry for his own amusement in the time when he worked as a schoolteacher in Ruthven.⁶⁰ Already at the age of 19 he started contributing with his own work, mostly with poems with nationalistic thematic based on the models of ancient Greek and Roman poetry and the Old Testament, to the *Scots Magazine*.⁶¹ One of his early works was, for example, the poem entitled “The Hunter,” which was inspired by the material about Finn mac Cumhaill. However, after his meeting with John Home in Moffat in October 1759, his career of the translator of ancient poetry started.

Home convinced the young Highlander to translate for him a piece of Gaelic poetry since he was not acquainted with the language. Macpherson has done so and presented him with the translation of “The Death of Oscur.” This poem evoked such admiration for the traditional Gaelic poetry with Home’s friends that they convinced Macpherson to translate more and finally publish his first work, although at that time anonymous, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* in 1760. *The Fragments* were an immense success and so the young translator was sent on a tour to the Highlands and the Isles to collect more of the ancient poetry of the bard Ossian and to recover a longer almost lost epic about Fingal and his deeds. Soon after his return he published *Fingal* in 1761, in 1763 this was followed by *Temora* and then finally with ‘Ossian’s’ complete works *The Poems of Ossian* published in 1765.

After this time Macpherson, who already established himself in the literary world, turned away from the Ossianic thematic. In this time the inquiries about the authenticity of Ossian also started which presented Macpherson as a plagiarist and liar.

⁶⁰ Fiona L. Stafford. *The Sublime Savage: James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 1999) 66.

⁶¹ Stafford, 42-43

3.2.1. *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*

After their publication in June 1760, the *Fragments* became an immense success. The work contained fifteen (in the second edition sixteen) short pieces mostly with the thematic of parting of lovers before one of them goes to war and their death. However, this work had a long genesis already behind itself.

Macpherson produced the first piece of his future *Fragments* in October 1759 in Moffat with the title “The Death of Oscur” (which was to be the future fragment VII) for John Home. In his first version, Macpherson stated that it is a poem in which Ossian laments over the death of his son Oscar. Oscar fought with his best friend Dermid because they both fell in love with the same woman; Oscar killed Dermid but was then killed in an accident by his beloved who afterwards committed suicide. Because this and other pieces the young author later translated were very popular, Macpherson was brought to translate more, although he was against such an enterprise. His reasons for declining might be various, listing from his shyness, his thought that when translated to English the Gaelic poetry may suffer from the transition, fear that it may be discovered that he invented the stories or his pride of a Highlander, as Stafford notes, which was alarmed that he would appear only as a translator and “that in a time when originality was the criterion of judging art.”⁶² However, Macpherson was finally convinced and *The Fragments of Ancient Poetry* were finally published during the next summer.

The genesis of the *Fragments* was, however, more complicated as it might seem. As MacCraith found out after studying the author’s letters, Macpherson was careless while sending some of his translations to friends without making copies and later had problems getting them back from them; he even made emendations to pieces he had already finished, therefore, there were many versions of the same poem. Moreover, he also wanted Adam Ferguson to correct his translations, however never supplied him with the originals.⁶³ This

⁶² Stafford, 80

⁶³ Mícheál MacCraith. “Wrestling with his Form: The Genesis of Macpherson’s *Fragments*.” *Time Refigured: Myths, Foundation Texts and Imagined Communities*. Martin Procházka and Ondřej Pilný eds. (Prague:

carelessness evokes many questions; firstly if Macpherson wanted to translate the popular stories of the Highlands and did not try to postpone the publication of his first work. Secondly, a question arises already here if the translator possessed some genuine poetry or made it all up.

However, after the appearance of *The Fragments*, Macpherson realized that he made almost a fatal mistake by claiming that Oscar from the 7th fragment was Ossian's son and therefore, published a revised edition where he corrected his former mistake. In the advertisement to the second edition he claims: "In this edition some passages will be found altered from the former. The alternations are drawn from more complete copies the translator had obtained of the originals."⁶⁴ In the new edition he corrected his mistake and offered a humble explanation of his error now asserting that this Oscar was not the son of Ossian but of Caruth and his murderer was Dermid, son of Diaran; and that this was not probably Ossianic poetry but a poem of some of his imitators.⁶⁵ Also J.S. Smart mentions this problem, he goes even further by claiming that:

This tale is so far from being common that no copy of it exists but Macpherson's. In no collection of Gaelic poems is anything told of the fight between Oscar and Dermid for the daughter of Dargo's love. And how shall we reconcile it with the legend, recounted everywhere in Ireland and the Highlands, that tells how Oscar was killed at Gavra by red-speared Caibre, High King of Erin?⁶⁶

Smart sees also other inconveniences in Macpherson's in explanation of his mistake. After examining the Fenian stories, Smart discovered another Oscar, the son of Garry of Garraidh, but also he thought at Garva and was killed there; even the Dermid from this fragment is different from the traditional one who always appears as the lover of Finn's wife Gráinne.⁶⁷ Therefore, there exists no proof of an existing model for this fragment and it can be said that this piece is of the translator's own invention; it is claimed that only two of the sixteen fragments are genuine Ossianic ballads and all the others are the author's own invention.⁶⁸

Litteraria Pragensia, 2005) 346-347

⁶⁴ Otto Jiriczek. *James Macpherson's Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1905) VI

⁶⁵ Jiriczek. *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, 23

⁶⁶ J.C. Smart. *James Macpherson: An Episode in Literature* (London: David Nutt, Long Acre, 1905) 91

⁶⁷ Smart, 91-92

⁶⁸ Smart, 94

Already in the *Fragments* Macpherson began with the mystifications with which he later continued in the *Poems*. He changed the form of the fragments from ballads into pieces of prose, what is interesting about this is, however, the fact that his manuscripts were in verse and then the printed version appeared in prose.⁶⁹ Moreover, already at this instance he started to claim that the stories were of Scottish origin and set on to glorify the ancient history of his country over Ireland. He also omitted St Patrick, who played an indispensable role in the Irish versions. He appears only in some of the fragments under the name ‘son of Alpin,’ a name that was unknown to many and therefore, his work was not to be connected with religion as such.

Moreover, in the preface to the *Fragments* Hugh Blair anticipates the existence of a larger epic about Fingal even before Macpherson was set on a tour to collect more ancient poetry. He directly states in his preface to the *Fragments*:

It is believed, that by a careful inquiry, many more remains of ancient genius, no less valuable than those now given to the world, might be found in the same country where these have been collected. In particular there is reason to hope that one work of considerable length, and which deserves to be styled an heroic poem, might be recovered and translated, if encouragement were given to such an undertaking. [He then gives a synopsis of what was later to become the plot of *Fingal*]. [...] And the author speaks of himself as present in the expedition of Fingal.⁷⁰

Therefore Macpherson must have had his plan of publishing the *Poems* prepared long before. After publishing *Fingal*, he also integrated many of the fragments into the epic, namely, as Jiriczek adds: “As Macpherson prepared the Fingal manuscript in the year 1761, he overworked the fragments I, II, IV, V and made them part of ‘Carric-thura’, X-XII of ‘The Songs of Selma,’ XIII-XV of ‘Fingal’, he used No VII in a note to ‘Temora’ as a possible variant of it. The numbers III, VI, IX, XIII B were not used.”⁷¹

⁶⁹ MacCraith, *Wrestling with His Form* 351

⁷⁰ Jiriczek, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, 6

⁷¹ Jiriczek, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, VII translation from German, the original text: Als Macpherson im Jahre 1761 den Fingalband vorbereitete . . . , verarbeitete er die Fragmente I,II, IV, V in Carric-thura, X-XII in The Songs of Selma, XIII-XV in Fingal, Nr. VII wurde in einer Note zur Temora als Variante beigefügt. Die Nummern III, VI, IX XIII B blieben unbenutzt

3.2.2. *The Poems of Ossian*

After the immense success of *The Fragments*, Macpherson was sent out on a journey to the Highlands and Isles to collect more of ancient poetry and moreover to recover a larger, almost lost epic about Fingal. It took him only eighteen months⁷² since he published in December 1761 his famous work *Fingal, an Ancient Epic Poem, In Six Books: Together with several other Poems, composed by Ossian the Son of Fingal*. However, already on January 16, the same year, he wrote a letter from Edinburgh announcing his great discovery: “I have been lucky enough,” he wrote, “to lay my hands on a pretty complete poem, and truly epic, concerning Fingal,” – the same poem of whose plot he had given a sketch before he left Edinburgh six months before.”⁷³ Therefore, the question arises if Macpherson even collected some material for what was to become *Fingal* or had the design already in his head before.

During the journey Macpherson became acquainted with many stories about the *fian*; many people recited to him old ballads, some even presented him with old manuscripts, however, he found nothing like a larger epic. On his visit to Thomas Fraser, the Minister of Boleskine, he was presented with *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*⁷⁴ which was to become one of major sources. However, today it is difficult to detect all his sources, not only because many of the ballads were lost but also because *The Poems of Ossian* are a compilation of many earlier works modified to suit Macpherson’s purpose. While writing the *Poems* he re-used many of the fragments from his first publication which he incorporated into his new epic, he also came up with new stories which he collected, possessed or knew before. Moreover, while composing *Fingal*, he mixed together or got inspired by many known folk-tales. As Bysveen found out, *Fingal* is mainly made of the action taken from the *Garbh mac Stairn* and the *Magnus (Manus) Ballads*. The episodes are based on the ballads: *Fingal’s Visit to Norway*, the *Maid of Craca*, *Ossian’s Courtship*, *Sliab nam Ban Fionn*, the *Praise of Goll* and possibly a ballad about Cuchullin’s chariot.⁷⁵ All these and possibly many other ballads served Macpherson as inspiration for composing *Fingal* and later *Temora*.

⁷² Stafford, 135

⁷³ Smart, 99

⁷⁴ Stafford, 118

⁷⁵ Joseph Bysveen. *Epic Tradition and Innovation in James Macpherson’s Fingal* (Uppsala, 1982) 14

Before the publication of *Fingal*, Hugh Blair provided the book with “A Dissertation concerning the Antiquity of the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal” in which he defended the authenticity and antiquity of the work together with explaining the ancient history of his country. In the “Dissertation” Blair also attempts to explain why the Gaelic poems of Ossian were unknown to most people of his time:

It will seem strange to some, that poems admired for many centuries in one part of the kingdom should be hitherto unknown in the other; and that the British, who have carefully traced out the works of genius in other nations, should so long remain strangers to their own. [...] The manner of those compositions is so different from other poems, and the ideas so confined to the most early state of society, that it was thought they had not enough of variety to please a polished age.⁷⁶

In the dissertation Blair also compares the Ossianic poems to the poetry of the early Middle Ages and highlights Ossian’s cultivated style over it, however, this cultivation was only the result of Macpherson’s adaptations of the former stories.

After the immense success of *Fingal*, Macpherson became an established figure of the Edinburgh literary circles and was known as the translator of ancient verse all over Britain. However, he set on to compose the second book of the future *Poems: Temora, an Ancient Epic Poem in Eight Books; Together with Several other Poems, Composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal*, which appeared in 1763. Also *Temora* was provided with a “Dissertation” but this time written by Macpherson himself. This piece is clearly aimed as a defence of Scotland as the country of origin of the Ossianic verse. In the “Dissertation” Macpherson modifies the histories of Ireland and Scotland to suit his purpose of glorifying his homeland. He even goes as far in claiming that the Irish tales of the Fenian cycle are a fake:

The pretensions of Ireland to Ossian proceed from another quarter. There are handed down, in that country, traditional poems, concerning the Fiona, or the heroes of Fion Mac Commal. This Fion, say the Irish annalists, was general of militia of Ireland, in the reign of Cormac, in the third century. [...] I have just now, in my hands, all that remains, of those compositions; but unluckily for the antiquities of Ireland, they appear to be the work of a very modern period.

⁷⁶ Otto Jiriczek. *James Macpherson’s Ossian: Fingal* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter’s Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1940) xiii-xiv

Every stanza, nay almost ever line, affords striking proofs, that they cannot be three centuries old. Their allusions to the manners and customs of the fifteenth century, are so many, that it is a matter of wonder to me, how any one could dream of their antiquity. They are entirely writ in that romantic taste, which prevailed two ages ago.⁷⁷

A further attack on the Irish may also be seen at the very beginning of his dissertation, where he states: “Nations, small in their beginnings and slow in their progress to maturity, cannot, with any degree of certainty, be traced to their source. The first historians, in every country, are, therefore, obscure and unsatisfactory.”⁷⁸

He also sees *Temora* more valuable than *Fingal* because it throws light on the history of Ireland and Scotland.⁷⁹ ‘*Temora*’ is also a continuation of the story of Fingal, King of Morven, and throws light on his second voyage to Ireland. Both these travels were to help the Irish against their enemies; the two voyages took place in not more than five years from each other, judging by the life of Cormac, the Irish king, and his guide Cuchullin who was not among the living when the actions at *Temora* took place. The story of the events at *Temora* were nothing new to the readers, a shorter version of this tale appeared in the book together with *Fingal* just two years earlier. However, these two versions differ not only in their length but in some of the episodes and many details. However, it is not as the author claims in his dissertation to *Temora* that it was only an opening⁸⁰ that appeared in his previous poem. The purpose of this dissertation is, however, undoubtedly claiming the superiority of Scotland over Ireland and to convince the readers that the Ossianic balladry is of Scottish origin. In the dissertation Macpherson devotes space to the early history of Scotland and Ireland claiming that Ireland was inhabited by the ancient Caledonians from Britain and not vice versa.⁸¹ He tries to support his theories by claiming that the Scottish tongue is closer to the original Gaelic:

A Scotsman, tolerably conversant in his own language, understands an Irish composition, from that derivative analogy which it has to the Galic of North-

⁷⁷ Otto Jiriczek, *James Macpherson's Ossian: Temora* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1940) xxii-xxiii

⁷⁸ Jiriczek, *Temora* i

⁷⁹ Jiriczek, *Temora* xviii

⁸⁰ Jiriczek, *Temora* xviii

⁸¹ Jiriczek, *Temora* vii

Britain. An Irishman, on the other hand, without the aid of study, can never understand a composition in the Galic tongue. – This affords a proof, that the Scottish Galic is the most original, and, consequently the language of a more ancient and unmixed people.⁸²

By all these attacks on the Irish, Macpherson tried to prove his theories of the Ossianic compositions being Scottish and not Irish and cast an air of primitiveness on Ireland. He also attempts to calm down his critics. However, despite all his attempts to prove the originality of his two publications, there arose a still bigger wave of suspicion and he had more critics than ever before. After he published the last work with the Ossianic thematic, *The Poems of Ossian*, incorporating both ‘Fingal’ and ‘Temora’ together with all the poems attributed to the bard, he now turned his attention to British history and politics never to return to Ossian again nor to give his statement or defence in the inquiry about the originality about the works he published.

Macpherson’s and Blair’s dissertations had another purpose, namely to glorify their home country, Scotland, and to present it as being the home of an ancient nation with many traditions and an old, highly developed culture as same as literature. Ossian served them well for this purpose and Blair together with Macpherson alluded to him often as of the Scottish Homer or Homer of the North. This must have had an enormous effect on the readership of that time. What Macpherson and Blair wanted to reach in their dissertations was presenting the public with a remote age full of ideal heroes who had the best manners, lived in a working well-organized society etc. This image created by them must have seen as an utopia to the 18th century readers. However, since many believed in the authenticity of the *Poems* this description evoked pride in the minds of the Scots that they had such a long history and that the literature of their country was not barbarous at all as it might had been thought and that with this they may compete with such cultures as of those of Rome or Greece. Therefore, it may be said that the *Poems* had a deep nationalistic context.

3.2.3. Macpherson’s Innovations

⁸² Jiriczek, *Temora* xxi

One of Macpherson's major stylistic achievements was to create an epic out of the former ballads about the Fenian cycle. Today we cannot be certain if Macpherson believed in the existence of a 'larger epic' or if he knew from the beginning that nothing as such existed in the Highlands and planned its invention. As Bysveen notes:

In his preface to the first edition [of the *Fragments*], Blair anticipated that an epic 'of considerable length' might be found and translated. In fact Macpherson may at first have believed that such a poem existed in the oral tradition, but as his collecting proceeded he must have realized that he had been mistaken. If the public was to have an epic poem of acceptable length and capable of being judged by traditional standards, Macpherson himself would have to compose one.⁸³

To compose this epic, the 'translator' had to connect the ballads which he gathered, because as in Ireland, the tales of Ossian were found only in pieces of individual ballads and songs each telling only an episode or referring to one moment of the history of the fian. Therefore, Macpherson used only something from each ballad which at that time suited his purpose. Smart remarks on this problem:

Traces of them [the ballads] are scattered all throughout his work; in one place the outline of a tale, in another a short descriptive touch, in another a fragment of a speech. But not one ballad is given entirely and literally; and his knowledge of some is attested only by tiny scraps embedded in long pages of his composition. He pulled the ballads to shreds; took from them what suggestion he pleased, and inserted them where he thought fit; and reconstructed the Fenian legend from top to bottom.⁸⁴

Fiona Stafford explains one of the possibilities why Macpherson might have chosen finally to create an epic out of the existing ballads: "Macpherson seems to have shared a belief common in the Highlands: that Ossian's poems had been distorted by the succession of bards who had recited or recreated his poetry,"⁸⁵ and furthermore she also claims:

By dismissing his principal sources as corrupt, Macpherson felt free to 'restore' the Gaelic poems to what he thought they ought to have been. The traditional figure of Ossian, familiar throughout the Highlands as the last survivor of the

⁸³ Bysveen, 131

⁸⁴ Smart, 102

⁸⁵ Stafford, 83

Fiana, was thus to be presented to the English-speaking world with the ideas and preoccupations of James Macpherson. Macpherson had failed to find an original voice in the poetic language of his own age, producing only derivative poems which interested no one. Now, by speaking through the mouthpiece of the old Highland bard, he was to produce poetry that seemed more original than that of his own compositions.⁸⁶

The creation of this epic may have been a large chance for the young Macpherson to compose a work which finally would make him famous and rich and he would not have to spend his time as a poor teacher.

Another of the innovations, which is ascribed to Macpherson, is that he freely mixed the stories and heroes from various cycles, namely the Ulster and Fenian cycle which were always differentiated in Ireland. Both the cycles were connected with a different province, both had their heroes and typical adventures, and moreover, were connected with a different time. However, as Professor Mackinnon found out, the two cycles started to mix in Scotland long before Macpherson.⁸⁷ The stories of the two cycles appeared together already in *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*, so long before the translator. Therefore, it can be said that he only continued with this tradition and not invented it by himself.

Another of Macpherson's innovations was to create an age with polished manners and give rise to the phenomenon of the so called 'Noble Savage.' Macpherson's heroes are almost chivalric knights, following a code of honour, protecting the weak and are always just. According to Bysveen, the translator wanted to create an age full of ideal heroes to demonstrate that the Scottish had not only a remote but idealistic past; with all this he tried to vindicate the honour of his homeland.⁸⁸ The paradox, therefore, was that although the episodes which Macpherson described in his work took place in the early centuries AD, the behaviour and the manners of his heroes were those of the 18th century. Hugh Blair noted this already in his in his dissertation:

Ossian's heroes have all the gallantry and generosity of those fabulous knights, without their extravagance; and his love-scenes have native tenderness, without any mixture of those forced and unnatural conceits which abound in the old

⁸⁶ Stafford, 84

⁸⁷ Bysveen, 60

⁸⁸ Bysveen, 55

romances. In Ossian “we find tenderness, and even delicacy of sentiment;” the Fingalian heroes are actuated by “magnanimity, generosity, and true heroism.”⁸⁹ His heroes, moreover, appear as 18th century gentlemen, this may be one reason why they were so popular among the readers. However, the reason why Macpherson might have used this depiction and not the historically correct information was that he wanted to demonstrate to his English readership (because the *Poems* were mainly designed for the reading public in England and Edinburgh) that the Scots already lived in an age where they already had a working society with good manners when the English were still savages.

What also strikes the reader and is one of the characteristics of his work is the simplicity and the usage of language. Although the author mostly describes battles where many people are being killed and blood should be everywhere, there is no indication of brutality, pain or killing. The only mention of death is the listing of who fell in a battle. Macpherson’s language is almost emotionless, although he describes emotionally extreme situations where the reader feels that the characters should have particular feelings, but nothing as such appears there. To use the words of Corina Laughlin: “Ossian’s words are decidedly emotional [...] Not a single word describes feelings directly. We get no adjectives like ‘sorrowful,’ ‘dreadful,’ ‘gloomy,’ no nouns like ‘grief’ or ‘anguish.’”⁹⁰ The only mood which is present throughout the *Poems* is melancholy. Moreover, Macpherson’s language reminds more of the *Illiad* than a work of an ancient bard. Macpherson himself alludes in his notes to this and makes the reader even more attentive to this problem. He not only uses the language but also stylized his work to make it similar to Homer, Virgil or to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.⁹¹

Another aspect which Laughlin mentions is the rhythmical quality of Macpherson’s language:

Again and again, patterns of regular meter emerge, only to disappear again into the looser rhythm of prose. [...] But, even as it seems to demand that we read it as able poetic form [...]. Again and again, awkward, strange, or otherwise ‘unpoetic’ phrases upset the poetic rhythms [...] but Macpherson’s technique is

⁸⁹ Adam Potkay. “Virtue and Manners in James Macpherson’s *Poems of Ossian*.” *PMLA*, Vol. 107, No. 1. Jan 1992. JSTOR. 19 Apr 2009. <www.jstor.org/stable/462805>

⁹⁰ Corina Laghlin. The Lawless Language of Macpherson’s ‘Ossian.’” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 40, No. 3. Summer 2000. JSTOR 19 Apr 2009. <www.jstor.org/stable/1556259>

⁹¹ Stafford, 137

clearly more than that. [...] He makes us feel [...] that we are reading an epic in ruins.⁹²

And:

The broken rhythms of the language reflect a deeper brokenness; and just below the surface of these prose-poems we find a world of the verge, a world of emotion without any moral code to keep it under control.⁹³

While composing his *Poems of Ossian*, James Macpherson created a completely new image of the early history of Scotland; therefore his work has mostly a deep nationalistic root. He tried to raise the national attitude of the Scots who lived under the English oppression and to demonstrate that the 'barbarous' Scots had a longer and more remote history. His work may be also seen as an attempt to raise the mood of the Scots themselves by showing that their 'ancestors' were heroes helping their friends almost all over the world. Furthermore, by composing the *Poems*, Macpherson finally established himself as a popular writer and a celebrity even outside the borders of his mother-land.

3.3. Comparison of the Irish and Scottish Forms of the Stories

At first it may seem that the two versions of the Ossianic stories appearing in Ireland and Scotland cannot have much in common since Macpherson re-modelled the tales completely to fit his needs and the time in which he was writing it. Despite this, we cannot forget that the tales which he gathered in the Highlands, which were similar to those existing in Ireland, served him as models for his epic.

Only Macpherson's work was different from the narrative due to his re-modelations to a longer epic, however, the other forms that existed in Scotland before and also after Macpherson were almost identical to what existed in Ireland. We can see this on the Fenian ballads contained in *The Book of the Dean of Lismore* and on the report of the Highland

⁹² Laughlin, 512

⁹³ Laughlin, 515

society which was engaged in the inquiry about the authenticity of the works of Ossian and managed to recover many of Macpherson's sources which were in the form of ballads. The repertoire of the Fenian tales was almost the same in both countries, only with the difference that in Scotland it came to the mixing of stories from various cycles. The ballads existed in Scotland primarily only in oral form. This caused the differentiation almost from clan to clan and the existence of only fragments of tales and not lengthy works as in Ireland. Because of these many similarities, this chapter deals only with the differences and similarities of the Irish versions of the myth and Macpherson's.

It can be said that although Macpherson for sure knew the Irish ballads about Finn and Oisín, they did not serve as his sources. The author himself never visited the country; what he got as the bases of his work were the ballads he collected all over Scotland. These Scottish ballads must have been very similar to those existing in Ireland, with the difference that the Irish Oisín was called Ossian in Scotland, Finn was the name of the bard's father also in Scotland; the name Fingal was probably Macpherson's own invention. As it was noted before, Macpherson used some parts of the Fenian tales, sometimes only as inspiration, but incorporated many of the parts of certain stories of their motifs into his own work. He did not use all the Fenian stories as such, only what suited his purpose and his epic. Therefore, it can be said that the Irish heroes are only models for his figures, for example Finn mac Cumhaill was only a prototype on which Macpherson modelled his Fingal.

The biggest difference between Macpherson's work and the Irish Fenian tales is, naturally, their form. The Irish tales were written first in the lore of place-names genre and later were transformed into ballads. The ballads existed also in Scotland and presented the material which he had collected during his travels through his country. However, as Blair noted in his preface to the *Fragments*, there was to be a 'larger epic' existing in the Highlands and because Macpherson did not find anything like it or knew nothing as such ever existed, he had to compose it himself to please his sponsor and the public who eagerly awaited the epic.

One of the major differences between the Fenian stories and the *Poems* is their location. Macpherson 'stole' the Irish tales and located them in his homeland. From this time, Fingal was thought to be the king of Morven and went to his former Irish home Erin only to

help the country against its enemies. This change of location is also connected with the portrayal of the king. While the Irish hero developed throughout centuries and was portrayed almost in all stages of his life and the ways of his description changed immensely from drawing him as a god to a simple soldier; Macpherson's Fingal does not develop. He is depicted as an old king who is at the head of his army, gives orders and fights only when necessary. This depiction of Macpherson's is closer to a medieval king than of an ancient hero.

Another significant difference between Macpherson and the Irish form of the story is the absence of religion in the *Poems*. In many cases the Irish stories have the form that an ancient hero is conversing with St Patrick. In the *Tales* the subject of their talks was to introduce the saint in Ireland and to explain to him why the places they visit have their strange names and to tell him of the Fenians. In the later forms, the major theme of their talks was religion. St Patrick, therefore, together with Oisín, Caoilte and Finn was one of the main characters of the Fenian stories, although not directly belonging to the cycle itself. However, in Macpherson there are no traces of religion of any kind. Only in the fragment called "The Death of Oscur" Ossian addresses a man as 'son of Alpin' which is to be St Patrick, only bearing an unusual name for his character so that the readers would not discover his true nature. The reason of the absence of religion in Macpherson might have again been his attempt to prove the antiquity of his work; therefore the setting is in a time before the coming of Christianity to Scotland.

Nowadays it is difficult to trace the remains of the Fenian stories in Macpherson's work. The author mastered his task in taking only bits of the stories and incorporating them into his epic and so creating a completely new work. Although not long after the publication of the *Poems*, the affairs about the authenticity of the work started and Macpherson, from that time, was called the biggest plagiarist in the history of literature, and kept this unfavourable reputation for very long. As O'Halloran wrote:

Over a century passed, however, before it was finally established that James Macpherson, the self-proclaimed translator, had in fact composed the poems himself, drawing in some degree on the traditional tales and ballads of the Highlands of Scotland and his raw material. From these he obtained both the

main characters and many of the plots, but so many alternations and amalgamations that they bore at times only vague resemblance to the original tales.⁹⁴

Today we know that the *Poems* are the product of Macpherson's own genius, and not a work of an ancient bard. He was not a mere translator of the *Poems* but its author and the Ossian of the *Poems* is, therefore, Macpherson himself.

4. CONCLUSION

This thesis is mainly concerned with the development of the Fenian narratives about the adventures of Fion (later Finn or Fingal) and his war-band, the *fian*, as it was told by his son, the bard Oisín (later Ossian). The Fenian tales are unique in literary history because they have fascinated people for more than thousand years and are still being written. Since the 12th century when the first codex, *The Book of Leinster*, containing the first five stories about Finn mac Cumhaill and his *fian* appeared, hundreds of books with the same thematic saw the light of the world. Some are almost unknown today or even lost and others, on the other hand, became an inspiration for the whole era.

The story about the hero Finn and his army of warriors was first written down in Ireland in the 13th century (according to other sources already in the 12th century) and was the

⁹⁴ O'Halloran, 69

main narrative of the Fenian cycle. However, the story itself is much older circulating as a part of oral tradition of Ireland and Scotland for centuries. The original story has changed immensely during the centuries due to its oral character. The same happened to the role of Finn and his troops of young warriors, the stories won on significance and become one of the major cycle of tales of Ireland and later Scotland.

In the first story where one of the first mentions of Finn appears, called *The Poem of Fothad Cananine*, Finn (at that time called Fion) was presented only as one of many soldiers fighting in the army of a hero named Fothad. In the middle of the 12th century one of the most famous old Irish codices was written - *The Book of Leinster*, containing among others one of the first written tales about Finn: *Tochmarc Ailbhe (The Wooing of Ailbhe)*, *Aithed Gráinne re Diarmait (The Elopement of Gráinne with Diarmait)*, *Uath Beinne Étair (The Cave of Howth)*, *Uath Dercce Ferna (The Horror of Derc Ferna)* which is now lost, and *Echtra Fhind i nDerc Ferna (The Adventures of Finn in Derc Ferna)*.⁹⁵ However, the most important tale about the deeds of Finn mac Cumhaill and his troops appeared a century later in *Acallamh na Senórach (Tales of the Elders of Ireland)*.

This collection of stories from the late 12th or early 13th century served as a model for almost all tales about the heroic leader of the Irish troops and heavily contributed to the Ossianic tradition by making the Fenian heroes almost supernatural beings, models of heroism, strength and wisdom. In the *Tales of the Elders of Ireland* Finn appears still as a servant of the High King of Ireland, however, enjoys his close friendship and is almost equal to him. The *Tales* were very popular among the people of Ireland, they were well known to the poets and bards who recited them and they became a part of the oral tradition of the country. Later they were written down. Furthermore, the existing stories were copied and re-written; many other tales were being attached to them, which led to a large differentiation from the original. Throughout the Late Middle Ages more Fenian tales started to be written, these were for example: *Accallam Bec (The Little Colloquy)* which is a shortened version of the *Tales* where Oisín and not Caoilte is the guide of St Patrick, *Macgnímartha Finn (The Boyhood Deeds of Finn)*, *Cath Fionntrágha (The Battle of Ventry)* which is one of the most important sagas of the Fenian cycle dating from the 15th century, *Agallamh na Seanórach*

⁹⁵ *Tales of the Elders of Ireland*, xv

(The Colloquy of the Ancients) from the 15th century which is another version of the *Little Colloquy* or *Duanaire Finn (The Poem Book of Finn)*, which nowadays together with the *Tales* belongs to the most significant books about the Fenians.

These stories were known also in Scotland, however, no one knows how long; one possibility is that they got to Scotland in the 7th century or in the 14th century, when Scottish and Irish poets met, and when the recitation of Fenian tales also might have taken place. However, it is more probable that the stories got to Scotland between these two dates. Nevertheless, these stories became a part of the Scottish oral tradition but existed mostly only in fragments varying from clan to clan. There were some differences between the Irish and Scottish tradition, one of the most important ones was the mixing of stories from various cycles in Scotland. Furthermore, the Fenian narratives existed in Scotland mainly in oral form, there were many versions of the stories which were fragmented or were preserved in short ballads. In the 16th century some of the fragments were compiled by James and Duncan Macgregor into *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*, which was one of the first Scottish manuscripts containing Fenian ballads. There were many similar tales about the Irish heroes in Scotland and were treated as a part of Scottish mythology, mostly without the people knowing that they were formally Irish. Many of these stories were collected by James Macpherson in the second half of the 18th century, adapted and published first in Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* and after their immense success in his famous work *The Poems of Ossian*.

Macpherson's work made the stories about the adventures of Fingal (which was Macpherson's name for the Irish hero Finn) and other members of his *fian* known world wide. Macpherson's books caused a sensation world wide, and led to an increased interest for the ancient past and the beginning of the so called 'Ossianic era.' *The Poems of Ossian* filled a gap in the history of Scotland and strongly contributed to the Scottish national revival by making Scotland a country which was able to 'compete' with the history of its oppressor country England and showed the civility of the Scottish people already in the ancient times when the English still lived as savages. Moreover, the *Poems* were written not only to distinguish the Scottish past and culture from England but also Ireland, against which the dissertations were aimed.

Macpherson completely modified the stories of the Fenian cycle using only some parts of the former stories or sometimes only their themes or some conversations from them and made from many parts of stories longer epic pieces which presented Scotland in a glorious age full of ideal heroes who whenever it was needed went to help the much weaker neighbour Ireland. Macpherson's Ossian also differed from his Irish counterpart Oisín on whom he was modelled. Ossian was presented as man who is looked upon by all others for his wisdom, experience and powers; he was much closer to the portrayal of Oisín in works such as *The Little Colloquy*.

Macpherson and Blair created in their dissertations a completely new chapter in the early history of their country. They described the early history of Scotland and so 'created' the sublime ancient history of Scotland in which Ossian was often presented as the Scottish Homer having the same abilities, using a refined language full of imagery and beauty. This presentation of Scotland in Macpherson's work had a deep nationalistic context and perhaps because of that was very popular among the readers. Despite it was later proved that the work was a forgery, and that they were not the work of an ancient bard but Macpherson himself, *The Poems* undoubtedly were one of the most influential works of its time.

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SHRNUTÍ

Tato práce se zabývá vývojem fenianských příběhů o hrdinských činech Finna (známé také pod jménem Fion či Fingal) a jeho pluku, tzv. fian, jak o tom vyprávěl jeho syn, bard Oisín (později znám jako Ossian). Fenianské příběhy jsou dnes unikátní součástí dějin literatury, jelikož fascinují čtenáře po více než tisíc let a stále se píše dodnes. Od 12. století, kdy byl sepsán první kodex s názvem *Leinsterská kniha (The Book of Leinster)*, obsahující mj. pět příběhů o hrdinovi jménem Finn Mac Cumhaill a jeho družině, vidělo světlo světa několik stovek děl se stejnou tematikou. Některé jsou dnes téměř neznámé, jiné byly úplně ztraceny a jiné se naopak, se staly inspirací pro celou éru.

Příběh o hrdinovi jménem Finn a jeho družině byl poprvé zapsán v Irsku ve 13. století (některé zdroje uvádějí století dvanácté.) a byl hlavním příběhem tzv. fenianského cyklu. Tento příběh sám o sobě je ale mnohem starší, jelikož koloval po staletí jako součást ústní tradice Irska a Skotska. Původní příběh se po staletí značně změnil. To samé se stalo i

Finnovi, který se stával čím dál tím více populárním hrdinou, až se příběhy o něm a jeho družině staly jednou z hlavních součástí ústní slovesnosti jak v Irsku, tak ve Skotsku.

Původní příběh, *Báseň o Fothad Canainne (The Poem of Fothad Canainne)*, ve kterém se nachází jedna z nejranějších zmínek o Finnovi, ukazuje tohoto hrdinu v poněkud neobvyklém světle – Finn je tu popisován pouze jako člen družiny hrdiny jménem Fothad, a ne jako její vůdce jako v novějších verzích. V polovině 12. století byl v Irsku sepsán jeden z nejvýznamnějších kodexů raného středověku – *Leinsterská kniha*, která obsahovala mj. i pět příběhů s fenianovskou tematikou. Zde se hrdina již objevuje ve své tradiční roli vůdce vojska. Nejdůležitější příběh o skutcích Finna, *Vyprávění starců (The Tales of The Elders of Ireland)*, byl však sepsán až o století později, tedy ve 13. století.

Tato sbírka povídek z pozdního 12. nebo raného 13. století sloužila jako předloha pro téměř všechny příběhy o tomto rekoví a přispěla k utváření ossianovského mýtu tím, že udělala z Finna, jeho syna, barda Ossiana, Ossianova syna Osgara a z dalšího hrdiny jménem Caoilte téměř nadpozemské bytosti, prototypy hrdinství, síly a moudrosti. V této knize doprovázejí starci Oisín a Caoilte sv. Patrika, který dorazil v 5. století do Irska šířit křesťanství. Seznamují ho s místy spojenými s fenianskými hrdiny a jejich příběhy. Povídky, které se staly součástí *Vyprávění starců*, byly velmi oblíbené v Irsku, znali je básníci a bardové, kteří je recitovali před svými patrony nebo při shromážděních. Tyto příběhy byly po dlouhou dobu jen součástí ústní slovesnosti země. Sepsány byly teprve až ve 13. století, a proto dnes existuje mnoho verzí těchto raných povídek. Po příchodu Normanů do Irska roku 1175 se fenianské povídky staly velmi populární a bylo napsáno mnoho nových knih s touto tematikou. Příběhy fenianského cyklu se v této době uchytily, jelikož odpovídaly dobové módě – obsahovaly příběhy plné magie, nadpozemských sil, zmínky o obrech a jiných bytostech či cesty do dalekých zemí. Proto začala tato tematika v této době vzkvétat. Postupem času se také měnily role a postavení jednotlivých hrdinů. Z Finna se pomalu stával král a Oisín nahradil Caoilteho jako vypravěč příběhů. Od této doby byl hlavním bardem vojska svého otce.

Fenianské příběhy byly také známy ve Skotsku, ale dnes nikdo neví, jak a kdy se tam dostaly. Mohlo to být již v 7. století, kdy se na západním pobřeží Skotska rozkládalo irské království Dalriada nebo později. Během 14. století se pravidelně konala setkání irských a

skotských básníků, kde se také mohly recitovat fenianské příběhy, v té době velmi oblíbené. Lze proto předpokládat, že se příběhy s fenianskou tematikou dostaly do Skotska nejpozději v tomto období. V průběhu staletí se tyto povídky staly součástí ústní tradice Skotska, ale povětšinou zde existovaly jen v podobě fragmentů, které se lišily od klanu ke klanu. V 16. století některé fragmenty sesbírali James a Duncan Mcgregorové a sepsali pod názvem *Knihy děkana z Lismore (The Book of the Dean of Lismore)*. Ve Skotsku existovalo mnoho povídek podobných těm irským, ale většinou byly považovány za součást skotské ústní slovesnosti a nikdo nevěděl, že byly původně irské. Mnoho těchto příběhů sesbíral ve druhé polovině 18. století James Macpherson a přepracoval je do svého prvního díla *Fragmenty starověké poezie (Fragments of Ancient Poetry)* a po jejich obrovském úspěchu vydal své stěžejní dílo *Básně Ossianovy (Poem of Ossian)*, které vyšlo roku 1765.

Macpherson proslavil příběhy o hrdinovi jménem Fingal a jeho družině téměř po celém světě. Jeho knihy způsobily senzaci a vedly ke zvýšenému zájmu o historii a počátek tzv. Ossianovského věku. *Básně Ossianovy* vyplnily díru v dějinách Skotska a přispěly ke skotskému národnímu obrození tím, že ze Skotska udělaly zemi, která mohla soupeřit s Anglií, ovládající v té době Skotsko, o to, kdo má delší a slavnější historii. Navíc umožnily Skotům povznést se nad Angličany tím, že měli civilizované předky již v době, kdy většina Angličanů byla pouhými divochy. Kvůli tomuto národnímu aspektu sloužily *Básně Ossianovy* jako předloha pro jiná národní díla, např. české *Rukopisy Královédvorský a Zelenohorský* a ovlivnily spisovatele, jako byli W. Scott či J.W. Goethe.

Macpherson pozměnil původní příběhy fenianského cyklu. Z některých povídek si vzal jen téma, z některých použil část či konverzaci, ale hlavně spojil původní balady do uceleného epického příběhu, který ukazoval Skotsko ve věku plném ideálních hrdinů, kteří kdykoliv to bylo potřeba, pomohli slabšímu sousedovi, Irsku. Hrdinové žijící v tomto věku byli prezentováni jako ctnostní, téměř s vybraným chováním gentlemanů 18. století. Ve svých disertacích Macpherson a Blair vytvořili novou kapitolu v dějinách své země. Tvrdili, že původní obyvatelé Skotska pocházeli z keltského kmene, který poté osídlil i Irsko, prezentovali tuto zemi jako slabou, která vždy musela spoléhat na pomoc silnějšího souseda. Svým popisem rané historie Skotska také vytvořili obrázek Ossiana jako skotského Homéra, který používal podobný vyspělý jazyk jako jeho řecký „kolega“. Tato

prezentace Skotska v Macphersonových dílech měla hlavně nacionalistický kontext a možná kvůli tomu bylo dílo tak úspěšné. Přestože se později ukázalo, že *Básně Ossianovy* byly podvrh a nebyly dílem starověkého barda, jak bylo původně prezentováno, ale samotného Macphersona, byly *Básně Ossianovy* bezesporu jedním z nejvlivnějších děl své doby.