

Fin as Ossian revisited: A Manx ballad in Belanagare and its significance

Zusammenfassung

Der Artikel behandelt eine Fassung der Ballade *Fin as Ossian*, die im Nachlass von Charles O'Connor aus Belanagare in der Royal Irish Academy aufbewahrt wird. Bei der Ballade handelt es sich um eine Variante (in Manx) der Erzählung vom Brand des Hauses Finns, die in Schottland und Irland weit verbreitet war. Der Artikel enthält den Text der Ballade mit einer Übersetzung ins Englische, sprachwissenschaftlichen Anmerkungen und einer Erörterung ihrer Herkunft. Der Artikel spricht sich dafür aus, dass der hier vorgelegte handschriftliche Text aus dem Jahr 1771 und von dem Altertumsforscher Charles Vallancey stammt. Seine Bewahrung steht im Zusammenhang mit der Tätigkeit des Philologen und Sammlers Rev. James MacLagan auf der Insel Man im Sommer 1771.

Introduction

The ballad known to modern scholars as *Fin as Ossian*¹ ranks highly in the relatively small corpus of Manx literature. It was, at one time, thought to be the oldest piece of verse in the Manx language (cf. WOOD 1920); however, R.L. THOMSON (1960–61) has since convincingly demonstrated that the song known as the *Manannan Ballad* or *Manx Traditionary Ballad* (henceforth *MTB*) is, in strictly linguistic terms, older. Nonetheless, *Fin as Ossian* retains its importance in the small literary canon of Manx, not least because it is one of very few extant examples of *fiannaigheacht* literature from the Isle of Man, a genre of heroic literature concerning the hero Finn mac Cumail, his son Oisín and their retinue, a genre common to the entire Gaelic-speaking world.² There is a further reason

¹ The eighteenth-century English-based spelling *Ossian* (Irish *Oisín*, Scottish Gaelic *Oisean*), made familiar by the various publications of James Macpherson (see GASKILL 2004: xviii–xix), has been retained here and throughout this article because it is the form of the name found in the three earliest of the four manuscripts containing the ballad. BRODERICK (1990), WOOD (1920) and A.W. MOORE (1896) spell the name as one might expect it to occur in Manx orthography (*Oshin*); however, there is no evidence for this spelling in any of the eighteenth-century copies of the ballad.

² For an excellent overview of the literary tradition of *fiannaigheacht* in Ireland and Scotland see the various contributions in ARBUTHNOT and PARSONS (2012). Other examples of *fiannaigheacht* material in Manx have been edited by BRODERICK (1981; 1982; 1983). These include a short Manx tale from Edward Farragher, a version of the tale known in Irish as *Fionn sa Chliabhán* (BRODERICK 1981; 1982). Another ver-

to regard *Fin as Ossian* as being of central importance to the Manx literary tradition. As will be argued below, the circumstances around the collection of this eighteenth-century ballad provide a unique insight into the preservation and cultivation of secular Manx literature in the late eighteenth century.

It is generally accepted that much of the interest in the collection and publication of the Gaelic literature of Ireland and Scotland in the eighteenth and even into the nineteenth century was driven by the controversy triggered by the publications of James Macpherson (cf. MEEK 2004; Ní MHUNGHAILÉ 2009). Although he was not the first to collect *fiannaigheacht* material in Scotland — Jerome Stone, Rev. James McLagan and others had already amassed significant collections of heroic ballad material³ before the idea had even been suggested to Macpherson — it was Macpherson's international success and the ensuing controversy which gave rise to a market for the publication of genuine Gaelic heroic literature. This new-found interest in Gaelic literature in the second half of the eighteenth century quite remarkably spread to the Isle of Man, in Gaelic terms a culturally remote outpost largely isolated from the rest of the Gaelic world since the thirteenth century (R.L. THOMSON, *apud* GREENE 1976: 67). While a number of variants of this single Manx ballad were published by BRODERICK (1990) a quarter of a century ago, the purpose of this contribution is to draw attention to one which was not noticed at that time, but is perhaps the most important variant in helping us to appreciate the late eighteenth-century cultural and social milieu in which the ballad was 'collected', and for the understanding of the history of the ballad and the history of Manx secular literature more generally.

A copy of the Manx ballad *Fin as Ossian*, in a hitherto unidentified hand, is found in a composite manuscript of the Royal Irish Academy: RIA MS E ii 1 (746), pages 134; 135. The manuscript in question is a scrap book once belonging to Charles O'Conor of Belanagare (1710–1791), the eighteenth-century Irish historian, antiquarian and beacon of the Gaelic Enlightenment. Although not examined by BRODERICK (1990), scholarship was not entirely unaware of the existence of this version of the ballad in the Royal Irish Academy. The material was catalogued by Rev. Charles O'Conor, grandson of Charles O'Conor of Belanagare, in the early nineteenth century (see O'CONOR 1818: 171) and is also mentioned briefly in M'LAUCLAN and SKENE (1862: lxxxiv). Most remarkable of all is the appearance of a transcription of the Royal Irish Academy text in the *Manx Sun* newspaper, 27 November 1897, in a contribution by Rev. T. Talbot,

sion of this same tale was collected from a native Manx speaker but published in English by MORRISON (1911: 42–6; cf. BRODERICK 1982: 171, n. 1). A further example of a *fiannaigheacht* narrative in Manx, again from Edward Farragher, *Boddagh yn Cooat Laaghagh*, has been shown to be heavily indebted to contemporary nineteenth-century Irish models found in printed sources (cf. BRODERICK 1983: 2) and so cannot be counted as one traditionally found in the Isle of Man.

³ For further discussion and references, see DUNBAR (2013: 53–54) and GUNDERLOCH (2013: 74–84).

who was aware of the ballad being mentioned by O'Conor and M'Lauchlan and Skene.⁴ Most recently, however, it is listed in *RIA Cat.*, where the history of the manuscript as a whole is described by Gerard Murphy and Winifred Wulff as follows:

The difference in size of the pages, the number of scribes, and the wide range of dates within the limits of the 18th century, as also the constant recurrence of Charles O'Conor's handwriting throughout the whole volume, suggest that the ms consists of scraps collected or written by Charles O'Conor of Belanagare from boyhood on (*RIA Cat.* 2289).

The relevant portion of the manuscript consists of two adjacent folios (numbered pages 134 and 135). The first contains a transcription of the ballad in Manx orthography. The second folio, in the same hand as the first, contains a transliteration of the Manx text which aims, not always successfully, to conform to a more traditional Gaelic orthography. A diplomatic edition of both folios is given below, along with linguistic notes and my own translation of the text into English.

⁴ Talbot's contribution was part of a larger critique of A.W. MOORE's (1886) edition of the British Library text (referred to as Text T below). It can be noted that Talbot thought the entire poem to be an eighteenth-century fabrication. This suggestion can, I think, be dismissed; the narrative of the ballad diverges sufficiently from Irish and Scottish models for it to be uniquely Manx but I know of no suitable English model on which it might be based. Further, as will be demonstrated below, the ballad appears to have been part of a larger collection of secular Manx poetry made at the same time. It can be noted that Talbot was an ultracritical character, even going so far as to suggest that *MTB* was an eighteenth-century forgery (cf. R.L. THOMSON 1960–61).

Texts and Translation

[Page 134: In Manx orthography]

Fin & Ossian

A Manx Cronaght

- Hie Fin as Ossian magh dy helg.
 Cha rou ad dooiny ayn, sloo ny keyad
 Qui da daag ad ec y thie, agh Orree beg
 Daag ec y thie, da chead coo as da chead quellàn
 5 As three chead ben aag, & three chead shen chellagh –
 Doort inneen Fin rish inneen Ossian.
 Cre's nee mad craid rish yn Roiee gOrree.
 Kienle mad yn olt eckey dys ny cleäyn
 As kerree mad yn aile dys y chassyn [gloss: 'oile: a fire']
 10 Clisshyt dy dug Orry beg as
 Dennee yn smuir ree as y chass.
 Hie Orree beg magh roish son y chell
 As y spie choinne er y gheallin. [gloss: 'spaidh connadh: a bill hook]
 Hoght buirt moarey hug eh lesh as [for cutting scrubly or bushwood']
 15 As hoght cannonyn ayns dagh burt.
 Hug eh bart ayns dagh Unniag & dagh Dorryss
 Agh er mean y laar, hug eh yn bart solllys.
 Va Fin as Ossian, sy tra shoh shelg
 Cha row doinney ayn sloo keyad.
 20 Jeahg woar ren cheeney orroo as y ghlen near.
 As cheene orroo ny smoo lesh y ghea.
 Ree Fin as ree Ossian, derrey daase Ossian skee
 Agh Fin moar hene sodjey chum rish ree.
 Agh dullee Fin rish Ossian, 'gra dy trome
 25 Cha vel fagit ain, agh Toltanyn follum.
 –
 Desunt cetera

Translation:

Fin and Ossian went out hunting / There were no less than a hundred men /
 Who did they leave at home but Gorree Beg / They left at home two hundred
 hounds and two hundred pups / And three hundred young women, and three
 hundred old women / Said Fin's daughter to Ossian's daughter: / How shall we
 make a mockery of King Gorree / We will tie his hair to the harrows / And we
 will put the fire to his feet / Whenever Gorree made a move / [He] felt the bone
 marrow running from his foot / Gorree headed out, making for the wood / With

[Page 135: In ‘Gaelic’ orthography]

An Gaoidhlig

- Thigh Fin is Ossian amach do shealg
 Cha roibh a daoinne ann, sluagh na cead.
 Ci do dfhag=ad ag a thigh, ach Orree beg.
 Dfhag ag a thigh, da cead cù, is da cead cuilleàn
 5 Is tri chead ben-og, is tri cead sean chailleagh —
 Dubhairt ingean Fin ris ingean Ossian
 Creas na mad cradh ris an Ri gOrree.
 Cengal mad an fholt aige do as an cliathan
 As curri mad an oile do as a chossan.
 10 Clist do ttug Orri beg as.
 An tan an smaoir rith as a chos.
 Thigh Orry beg amach ris an choill
 As a spaidh connadh ar a gualan.
 Ocht beart mora thug e leis as.
 15 [line not transcribed]
 As ocht beart anns da fhinnioig is da dorras.
 Ach ar meadhon a làr, thug e an beart solluis.
 Da Fin as Ossian sa tra so shealg.
 Cha roibh daoine ann sluagh na cead.
 20 Deathach mhor rinn sineadh orra, as a glen n’iar.
 As sineadh orra nios mo leis a ghaoth.
 Rith Fin, is rith Ossian, deirigh dfhàse Ossian scìth
 Ach Fin mor fhein soda cum rish rith
 Ag dul Fin ris Ossian, ag radh, do trom
 25 Cha bhfhuil fagad ann, ach Toltanin folamh
 [gloss: ‘Toltanin: a fabrick in Ruins’]

his bill hook on his shoulder / He took eight large loads with him from it [the wood] / With eight bundles in each load / He placed a load in every window and every door / But in the middle of the floor he placed the lighting load / Fin and Ossian were hunting at this time / There were no less than a hundred [with them] / A great smoke spread over them from the glen in the west / and spread further still over them on account of the wind / Fin ran and Ossian ran, until Ossian grew tired / But it was the great Fin himself who kept running the longest / But Fin cried to Ossian, saying sadly / We have nothing left, but empty ruins.

Fin & Ofsian

A Manx Cronaght.

Hie Fin as Ofsian magh dy help. Tala-lee & Tala-lee.
 Cha rou ad doimney ayn, sloo ny heayd - St...
 Lii da daag ad ee y thie, agh Orree beg
 Daagge y thie, da chead coo as da chead quellian
 as three chead ben daag & three chead shen chelloagh —
 Doort inneen Fin, heek inneen Ofsian.
 Crés nee máa eráid rish yn Roisee y Orree.
 Kionle máa yn oit eckey dya ny cláayn
 as herree máa yn áile dya y chassyn — oile ofie
 Ullisht dy daag Orry beg as
 Dennee yn smuir nee as y chass.
 Hie Orree beg magh roish son y chell
 as y spie lehoimne er y gheallin. spaidh comadh a bill bood
 Hloght buirt moaney hug eh lesh as for cutting scrubby or brushwood.
 as hloght cannonyn ayn daagh buirt.
 Hloght eh bart ayn daagh Unniag & daagh Dorrys
 agh er mean y laar, hug eh yn bart sodjey.
 Da Fin as Ofsian, sy tra shoh sholg
 cha rou doimney ayn sloo heayd.
 Deagh noar ren cheency orroo as y ghlen near.
 as cheene orroo ny smoo lesh y ghea.
 Ree Fin as ree Ofsian, derrey daave Ofsian shee
 agh Fin moar hene sodjey chum rish ree.
 Agh duller Fin rish Ofsian, gra dy tromme
 cha vel fagit ain, agh Toltannyn follum.
 Deunt cetera.

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Fig. 1: RIA ms E ii 1 (746), p. 134. By permission of the Royal Irish Academy © RIA.

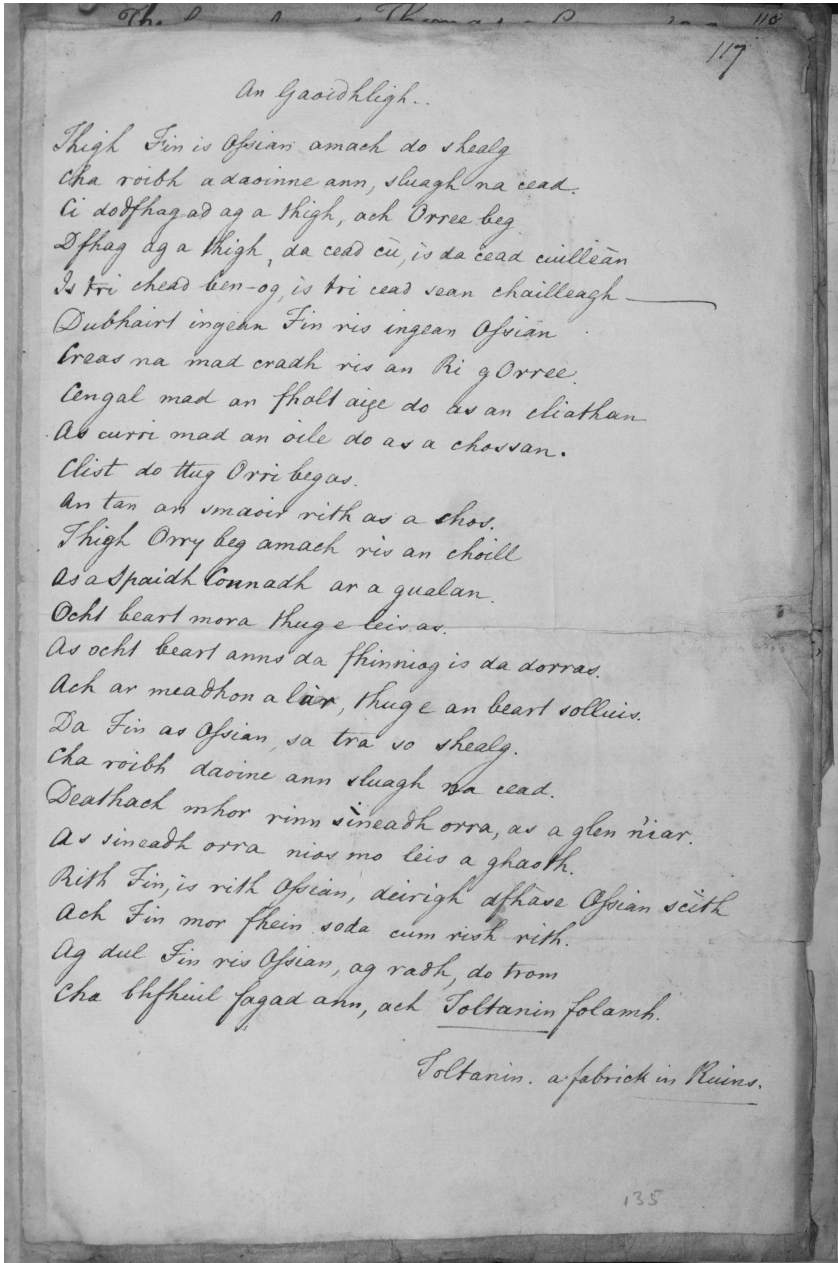


Fig. 2: RIA ms E ii 1 (746), p. 135. By permission of the Royal Irish Academy © RIA.

Notes to the text:

1 This line in the ms is followed by ‘Fala-loo & fala-lee’, and the next line is followed by ‘-Do-’ indicating that this refrain was to be sung after every line. These are the only two references to the refrain contained in this copy of the text.

2 *Cha rou ad dooinney ayn*. BRODERICK (1990: 58) takes this to be a conflation of two constructions: *cha row ayn dooinney* ‘there was not a man’ and *cha row ad dooinney* ‘they were not a man (less)’. For Manx (*ny*) *sloo* cf. Irish *níos / is lú*. Rev. Philip Moore, dealing with another version of the ballad, translates this line as ‘with not less than a hundred rangers’ (see below and Figure 4).

7 *Cre’s nee mad craid rish*. The Manx interrogative pronoun *crys* is not found in Late Spoken Manx, nor in the Manx Bible but is known elsewhere in the literature (cf. BRODERICK 1990: 58). It may have developed from *kys* ‘how’ (cf. Irish *conas*) by analogy with other interrogative pronouns in initial /kr-/ such as *c’red* ‘what’, *cre* ‘where’, *c’radd* ‘where’, *cre’n acht* ‘how’, etc. described in WILLIAMS (1994: 719).

Manx *craid* ‘mockery, derision, humiliation’ (cf. Scottish Gaelic *cnàid*) is often combined with the verb *jannoo* ‘do’, as here with the future tense, cf. *t’eh jannoo craid jeh baggyrt y shleiy* ‘he laugheth at the shaking of a spear’ (Job 41:29). Its use with the preposition *rish* is less common. The line is most accurately translated as ‘how shall we make a mockery of King Gorree’.

10 *Clisst*. KELLY (s.v.) defines *clysh* as ‘a quick sudden and violent motion, a start, a spring, a gambol’, cf. *clis* in Irish and Scottish Gaelic. Final <t> here is a reflex of the tendency, found in other Gaelic dialects, for final /s/ to become /t/, note also Manx *reesht* ‘again’ (cf. Irish *aris*); *eisht* ‘then’ (cf. Irish *éis*).

11 *Dennee* is the preterite of (*g*)*ennaghtyn* ‘feel, sense’, (cf. Scottish Gaelic *aithneachadh*) and is often used in the corporal sense, e.g. *t’ad er my yeeaylley*, as *cha dennee mee eh* ‘they have beaten me and I felt it not’ (Proverbs 23:35).

16 *Hug eh* is to be understood as ‘he put’ rather than ‘he gave’. In Manx the verbs corresponding to Irish *cuir* ‘put’ and *tabhair* ‘give’ fall together (cf. LEWIN 2015: 76).

18 *Va*: the ms has *Da*; this is an obvious mistake for the past tense of the Manx substantive verb *va*.

20 *ren cheeney orroo*. The tendency in Manx is for the verb *jannoo* ‘do’ to be used as an auxiliary. Here the preterite *ren* ‘did’ is combined with the verbal noun spelt *sheeyney* ‘stretch, extend’ in the Manx Bible (cf. Irish *síneadh*). Ex-

amples of comparable usage are: *ren ny cherubim sheeyney magh nyn skianyn* ‘they [cherubims] stretched forth their wings’ (1 Kings 6: 27); *T’eh sheeyney magh e laue er y chreg* ‘He putteth forth his hand upon the rock’ (Job 28: 9). In this regard our text differs from other versions of the ballad which use *lhieeny* ‘fill, flood’ (cf. Irish *líonadh*). This variation is likely to have arisen in the copying process; *cheeny* could easily be interpreted as *lhieeny* and vice versa without affecting the overall sense.

22 *derrey daase Ossian skee*. Manx *derrey* functions as a preposition and conjunction with the meaning ‘until’, earlier *naggydere* mirroring Irish *nó go dtara* ‘that it may come’, according to BRODERICK (1984: 120). The preterite *daase*, from *aase* ‘grow’, has a secondary meaning ‘become’, as in Irish and Scottish Gaelic so that the phrase is to be translated as ‘until Ossian grew tired’.

23 *sodjey* ‘farthest, longest’ mirrors Scottish Gaelic *as fhaide* meaning that the entire line should be translated as ‘but it was the great Fin himself who kept running the longest’.

24 *Agh dullee Fin rish Ossian, ’gra dy trome*. The Manx preterite verb *dyllee*, as it occurs in the Manx Bible, is to be connected with the earlier substantive *ilach* ‘a shout of lamentation’ (eDIL s.v., cf. *yllagh* and *gyllach* in Manx, *iolach* in contemporary Irish and Scottish Gaelic). As far as I am aware, only in Manx does this substantive appear to have undergone verbing: *As dyllee ad wheesh shen s’elgyssee, Jean y chrossey eh* ‘And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him’ (Mark 15: 14).

The burning of Finn’s house by Ree Gorree

The core narrative of the ballad is a familiar one of the *fiannaigheacht* genre, although with a decidedly Manx flavour. The ballad recounts the story of the destruction of Finn’s house by Garadh mac Morna after his being humiliated by the women of the *fian*. In most versions of the story this results in Garadh killing the women and then Garadh in turn being killed by the men of the *fian*. This narrative is found in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic oral traditions, in both song and story, as well as in manuscript sources.⁵ The earliest extant version of the story is that found in the late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century compilation known as *Acallam na Senórach* (Stokes 1900: 38–41; translated in DOOLEY and ROE 1999: 42–43). Within the *Acallam*, the narrative has been described by Ó hÓgáin as

a startling story of how Fionn and the Fianna went hunting one day and left their womenfolk ... in the care of Garadh mac Morna, who was then an old man. The women demanded that Garadh play chess with them, and

⁵ See, for instance, GWYNN (1904), J.F. CAMPBELL (1872: 175–180).

when he refuses they teased him, saying that all his strength and vigour was gone. Angered by this, Garadh lit a great fire in the palace and walked out, having locked the seven doors (Ó HÓGÁIN 1988: 154).

Unlike later oral versions such as the Manx ballad, there is no explicit reference within the *Acallam* to Garadh having killed the women. With this in mind, DOOLEY (2012: 98) sees this narrative within the *Acallam* 'as a warning exemplum about sources of social unrest: a paradigm of domestic restraint directed at two potentially verbally uncontrollable sources, women and old men'. To what extent this really can have been 'a paradigm of domestic restraint' is not at all clear, however. NAGY (2010: 313, n. 14) holds 'that the telling of the story in the *Acallam* renders the conclusion ambiguous at best' (cf. NAGY 1985: 73–4). The later oral versions of the narrative, including the Manx version given above, show no such restraint and listeners are left in no doubt but that Garadh, or in the Manx case his avatar Gorree, exacted a cruel revenge on his female companions. It therefore seems likely, as suggested by NAGY (2010: 310–11), that the ambiguity of the *Acallam* is in fact part of a 'process of chivalrisation' of a pre-existing, and if later distributions are to be trusted, ubiquitous and more gruesome narrative (cf. Ó CORRÁIN 1987; HÓGÁIN 1988: 154).⁶

There is one development particular to the Manx narrative that must be noted. In all Manx versions of the ballad a legendary character of the *fian*, Garadh mac Morna, has been conflated with the eleventh century Godred Crovan († 1095), king of Mann and the Hebrides, known as Guðrøðr in Norse and as Gofraid MÉRÁNACH⁷ in the Gaelic of the period. This eleventh-century dynast gained legendary status in Manx tradition as the patriarch of a Manx dynasty lasting nearly two centuries (McDonald 2007: 64; Hudson 2005: 170–174; Woolf 2005). Known in Manx as *Ree Gorree* or *Ree Orree*,⁸ it is as a dynastic patriarch that Godred Crovan is most famously described in *MTB*, where he is also alleged to have been the first king of Mann:

Myr shen eisht ren adsyn beaghey
Gyn dooinney ayn yinnagh orroo corree
Agh goll dy gheddyn pardon veih'n Raue
Er-derrey haink eh huc Ree Gorree

Lesh e Lhuingys hrean as Pooar y Ree
As ghow eh Thaloo ec y Laane

⁶ For detailed discussion of the importance of this narrative within the larger structure of the *Acallam* see PARSONS (2008: 18–21).

⁷ On this name and epithet, see Ó MAOLALAIGH (2014).

⁸ Both bynames occur in the present text: *Orree* at lines 2, 10 and 12; *Gorree* at line 7. The lower case <g> followed by upper case <O> in line 7 might be indicative of a process of editorial revision which will be discussed in greater detail below. On the development of *King Orree* from *King Gorree* due to misplaced juncture, see BRODERICK (1990: 58).

Shen y chied er ec row rieu ee
Dy ve ny Ree er yn Ellan

Cha geayll mee dy ren eh skielley ec Purt
Chamoo ren eh marroo aynjee

Agh aym ta fys dy daink jeh Sluight
Three Reeaghyn jeig jeh Ree Gorree

Now the land was in peace and prosperity, and no one at all troubling them, but going to seek forgiveness at Rome at last there came to them King Orry.

With a mighty fleet and the king's power he landed at the Lhen; he was the first whose fate it ever was to be a king in the island.

I have not heard that he did any damage in harbour, neither did he slay therein, but I know that there came of his seed thirteen kings from King Orry (R.L. THOMSON 1960–61: 542–545).

In this important sense *Fin as Ossian* represents an interesting synthesis of the Gaelic *fiannaigheacht* tradition and Norse traditions of the Isle of Man not found in either Ireland or Scotland⁹ but seen elsewhere in Manx oral literature (cf. BRUFORD 1986–87: 43–44; A.W. MOORE 1891: 27–29).

The manuscript and relationship to other variants

As the Royal Irish Academy text has not previously been examined in any detail, it is useful in the first instance to place it in the context of the other copies of the ballad. BRODERICK (1990) counts three manuscripts containing the ballad; the details are worth revisiting:

Manuscript M: This manuscript is now lost but was ‘written on the back of a leaf of an old copy book’, according to WOOD (1920: 297). The text is in the hand of Rev. Philip Moore (1705–1783), best-known as the general editor of the Manx Bible.¹⁰ It consists of 27 lines in total. The last two of these lines appear scribbled on the reverse of the page, indicating that they were added later. The Manx text was published in facsimile by WOOD (1920), along with a translation into English, also in the hand of Moore. The English translation contains material not found in Text M but corresponding to Text W.¹¹

⁹ There is also a Manx folk-tale incorporating some elements of the basic narrative of the burning of Finn's house, conflated with yet another tale (cf. CHRISTIANSEN 1931: 213–214).

¹⁰ For a short biographical account of Rev. Philip Moore, see BUTLER (1799: 186–205).

¹¹ See figures 3 and 4.

Fin & Ofsian

A. Mear Cronaigil
 Thee

Hic Fin es Ofsian magh, dy Helg - fald: lo: lee!
 Cha von ad Doirney ayn, sloo ny heayd - ya. H.
 Qui Da Daog ad ce y Glic, ngh orree beg - fald
 Doog ce y Glic, Da: cheid Boo, is Da: cheid Duickin
 As three cheid Ben aog, is three: cheid Shee Chelagh,
 Gort Finen Fin nish Finen Ofsian - Galt H.
 Cris nee mad Craid nish ya Noice forree - ya Di
 Kialc med ya Ott rehey dys ny Cliayn: ya. H.
 As herree mad ya talle dys y Chospyn - ya. H.
 Clafalt dy dug orry beg us - fald H.
 Dinnce yn smait ree as y Chaps - fald
 Hic orree beg magh roish ten ny Shee Ofsian, fald
 As y Spie: Chinnace er y Ghealkin - ya. H.
 Hocht buist moarey hug Ek lord as - fald lo: lo: lo: fald
 As hocht Cannonyn ayn Dagh Part - fald
 Hug ik lord ayn Dagh Waning & Dagh Dorriffs - fald
 agh er mean y laor hug al ya Part Sollys - fald
 As Fin es Ofsian, ny too shoh shoh - fald
 Cha von Doirney ayn Hea ny Heayd - Galt H.
 Jugh roor ren Channy oroo as y gllen waly - fald
 As shee oroo ny smoo lesh y Gha - fald H.
 Ace Fin es ree Ofsian, Lerrey Doare Ofsian Shee, fald
 agh Fin mooy here sodji: y chum nish ree - fald
 nish Dulle Fin, nish Fin ny Gie Di
 Thee nee Craid nish ayn

Fig. 3: Facsimile of Text M as published in WOOD (1920), in the hand of Rev. Philip Moore.

MS. 1487(d) C

W
Fin as Ofsian a Song
 Aie Fin as Ofsian magh Shaa dy Heilg.
 Fla row ad Dooiny ayn Sloo ny Chead.
 Quoi daag ad eg y Thie agh Gorrey beg.
 Doort Inneen Fin rish Inneen Ofsian
 Gys nee mayd Graaid mysh Kee Gorrey.
 Hiangle mayd y Oll sease gys ny Chleir
 As Greesee mayd yn Ile magh gys y Cill.
 Moostey dy dieg Gorrey beg lass
 Denuce eh yn Smuir soie as y Chas.
 Aie Gorrey beg er son ny Cheillagh
 As y Speik Chonnee er y Gheallyn
 Hoght Bhuirt hug eh lesh as
 Hoght Chonnaryn va ayns daagh Bart
 Hug eh Bart ayns daagh Innagh
 As Bart ayns daagh Dorrys
 Er main y Lhdare hug eh'n Bart Jollys
 Va Fin as Ofsian rish y Tra shoh Sheilg.
 As ha row ad Dooiny ayn Sloo ny Chead
 Peagh woar hink onoo as y itlen dheer

Fig. 5: p. 1 of MNHL ms 1487(d)C (Text W), in the hand of John Kelly. © Manx National Heritage.

Manuscript W: Preserved as Manx National Heritage ms 1487(d)C and written in a hand which neither WOOD (1920) nor BRODERICK (1990) identified. The text consists of 29 lines in total, 'the last [line] being inserted at a slightly later date by a different hand according to BRODERICK (1990: 51). This manuscript does not contain a translation of the text but the translation enclosed along with the Manx Text M corresponds closely to this text.¹²

¹² See figures 4, 5 and 6.

As theen ee oroo as lesh y Ghea.
 Roie Fin as roie Ossian
 Tea va Ossian thee beign da roie
 Agh Fin moar hene Todjey Chum rish roie
 Dyllee Fin back gys Ossian
 Oer vel ayns shoh agh Toltanyn follyn
 Luci ren ny Tichyn shoh agh Gouney beg
 Chopsyn eh vow ayns Thowl fo Chiegg
 Cha row ad äble Gouney beg y gheodan agh
 Agh Phluck ad eh magh er Chap
 Lesh Cabbyll keic eish reap ad sh dy Boare
 NB In Singing the above Song, fallallee and
 fallallen are repeated after every Line.

Fig. 6: p. 2 of MNHL MS 1487(d)C (Text W), in the hand of John Kelly. © Manx National Heritage.

Manuscript T: This is part of the Thorkelin Collection in the British Library, Add. 11215, in the hand of Peter John Heywood (1739-1790).¹³ It consists of 41 lines.

¹³ This is one of a small number of Manx texts and vignettes sent to the eighteenth-century antiquarian G.J. Thorkelin during his tour of Britain and Ireland (cf. FLOWER 1926: 604-606). For further information on Thorkelin's tour see KIERNAN (1983). For an insight into Thorkelin's interaction with late-eighteenth century Gaelic literary culture, most especially in a Scottish context, see Ó MUIRHEARTAIGH (2014).

The manuscripts containing Text M and Text W are dated by BRODERICK (1990) to 1762 or 1763, but this dating of both manuscripts is essentially unsound, as will be set out below. Manuscript T is part of a larger collection of Manx material sent by Peter John Heywood to Professor Grimur J. Thorkelin in October 1789. The texts of M and W are closely related. Text T, on the other hand, has the appearance of a significantly elaborated text. As to the relationship between M and W, Broderick has noted that:

The similarity of the texts in M and W suggest that they have been taken down from the same informant, and the irregularity of metre and the incompleteness of couplets, if that is what it is, would suggest imperfect memory on the part of the informant and/or that the text was not very well noted down (BRODERICK 1990: 54).

Rather than suggesting that the text ‘was not very well noted down’, the meaning of which is ambiguous, it might be more accurate to suggest, in light of the close relationship between M and W, that they were transcribed from the oral recitation of the same informant and that the orthographic differences between them indicate Text W was the subject of editorial revision. The copy in the hand of Moore accompanies a translation of the final lines of W that are, curiously, not found in M.¹⁴ This serves to emphasise once again the close relationship between Texts M and W. Although neither WOOD (1920) nor BRODERICK (1990) identified the hand of Text W, comparison with other material in the Manx National Heritage Library indicates it is in fact that of John Kelly (1750–1809).¹⁵ Kelly was the amanuensis of Philip Moore and was centrally important to the final stages of the production of the Manx Bible.¹⁶ This then accounts for the similarity between the two texts. If, as seems likely, Text W is the product of an editorial revision of Text M, then the most notable editorial intervention, besides the addition of the final lines, in Text W is the exclusive use of *Gorree* (x5) rather than *Orree*. These facts suggest that Text M and Text W were produced around the same time.

To the texts discussed by Broderick we may now add that printed above and once in the possession of Charles O’Conor of Belanagare, which I will call

¹⁴ These lines recount *Gorree* hiding from Fin and Ossian under a rock before being found and killed (see BRODERICK 1990: 55–56), reminiscent of other versions of the ballad where *Garadh* hides in a cave before being found by his pursuers (cf. J.F. CAMPBELL 1872: 176).

¹⁵ This alone is sufficient to negate BRODERICK’s (1990) suggestion that Text W was written in the first years of the 1760s; Kelly would have been too young to be the scribe.

¹⁶ Moore, in a letter dated 1 May 1772, noted that he could not have so readily completed the work ‘without the assistance of Mr Kelly, a very ingenious young man, trained up for this service, and a candidate for holy orders; who has been from the first my adjutant in revising, and correcting, and now transcribing a fair copy of the whole Bible’ (quoted in R.L. THOMSON [1969]: 185–6, n. 5).

Text B.¹⁷ It is immediately clear that the Royal Irish Academy text, Text B, does share a common source with Text M, the now-lost text in the hand of Moore. This is perhaps most clear in the title of the ballad in both manuscripts: 'Fin & Ossian a Manx cronaght'.¹⁸ The punctuation of lines 2 and 3 along with the use of the ampersand & instead of Manx *as* 'and' at lines 5 and 16 also indicate that Text B was copied either directly from M or from an extremely close copy (see figure 3). Neither this title, punctuation, nor the use of the ampersand is found in the other versions (Text W or Text T). By way of further explication of the relationship between Texts B and M, one can note that the initial line of Text M reads: *Hie Fin as Ossian magh Lhaa dy Helg*. The word *Lhaa* here, however, is a later addition to the text (see figure 3). Its inclusion is not seen in Text B but does occur in W. The occurrence of *Da* at line 18 of Text B, an obvious mistake for *Va*, the past tense of the substantive verb, might be indicative of two things. First, the transcriber of Text B was not very familiar with Manx (a fact supported by the many misunderstandings that are apparent in the 'Gaelic' transcription). Second, the transcriber certainly did not have recourse to a speaker of Manx when undertaking the transcription and transliteration.

Of all the eighteenth-century manuscript copies of the poem it is Text B in the possession of Charles O'Connor of Belanagare and Text M in the hand of Philip Moore which are the most closely related. This is clearly an important point in determining the provenance of Text B and in the explication of the history of the ballad more generally and requires further elaboration.

Provenance of Text B

The immediate source of Text B was Charles O'Connor's close associate, the engineer and amateur linguist Charles Vallancey (1731–1812).¹⁹ Not only is this indicated by a comparison of Text B with Vallancey's hand in the Vallancey-O'Connor correspondence in the Royal Irish Academy, but Vallancey obligingly

¹⁷ The presence of an item of *fiannaigheacht* material in Charles O'Connor's papers is noteworthy in light of his description of the genre as 'amusement for the vulgar, recited in various shapes to this day among them' (O'CONNOR 1783: 653–654; see also MAC CRAITH 2015: 185–186).

¹⁸ BRODERICK (1990: 51, n. 3) is correct in his observation that the facsimile image of Text M is not as clear as one might like. Nonetheless, he appears to be mistaken in his interpretation of the title of Text M as 'A Manx ronag'. This is to assume the existence of a Manx word ***ronag* 'short song/poem', not otherwise attested in Manx as far as I am aware. This assumption appears to rest on a misunderstanding of Irish *rannóg* as being derived from *rann* 'quatrain, stanza, verse'. The word *rannóg* does exist in Irish but it is not derived from *rann* 'quatrain, stanza, verse'. Comparison with Text B allows one to confirm that the word is in fact *cronnaght*, defined in Kelly's dictionary as 'a catch, a glee, a short and witty air or song, a dirge or ditty' (KELLY 1866, s.v. *cronnane*).

¹⁹ For an account of Vallancey's very varied life, see NEVIN (1993).

confirms it in the same correspondence. In a letter to O’Conor dated 3 September 1771 Vallancey notes that:

My correspondent in the Isle of Man has picked up a curious fragment of Ossian, I have attempted to correct the orthography on the opposite page, which wants your further correction – I am certain you will think the matter interesting enough to thank me for communicating it – he promises more which is in the hands of some old people in the island (RIA MS B i 2).

Vallancey was fascinated by the Manx language and went on to gain some awareness of the repertoire of Manx literature. Later in the 1770s, Philip Moore was in touch with Vallancey and may have even visited Vallancey in Dublin in 1774 (see BUTLER 1799: 657; 670). Vallancey also had a little-known pioneering role in publishing Manx literature; his is the earliest surviving printing of a section of the *MTB*, in the fourth volume of his *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis* (511; 551) in 1786.²⁰ All of these manifestations of Vallancey’s interest in Manx are later than the date of his letter to O’Conor, suggesting that at the time of his obtaining the poem, Vallancey was still a mere novice in terms of Manx language. His attempt at a transcription of the ballad into Gaelic orthography supports this assessment.²¹ While Vallancey’s interest in and treatment of Manx sources is deserving of a much fuller treatment it is sufficient for present purposes to note that Text B of *Fin as Ossian* was communicated to O’Conor by Vallancey in September 1771. This does not answer the question of who sent the ballad to Vallancey in 1771, however. Who was Vallancey’s ‘correspondent in the Isle of Man’ and was this person the conduit through which Vallancey’s subsequent interest in Manx literature was developed?

It is indicative of Charles O’Conor’s wide-ranging interests, not to mention correspondents that the provenance of the Manx text should be bound up with the provenance of another non-Irish Gaelic text in the collection: Alasdair mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill*. Both texts occur side by side in

²⁰ This text of the *MTB* which was published by Vallancey is taken from what he described as ‘an ancient chronicle of Man, printed in the Manks, 1778’. R.L. THOMSON (1960–61: 521) noted that no copy of this 1778 publication could be found but it would appear that there was one copy known to GILL (1932: 433) who claimed that ‘[o]nly one copy of the Rhymed Chronicle in Manx, printed in Douglas as a popular pamphlet in 1778, is known to exist’. Unfortunately, Gill did not elaborate on the location of the volume but it may yet come to light.

²¹ It appears, perhaps unsurprisingly, that Vallancey never made much real headway in terms of being able to understand Manx (cf. R.L. THOMSON [1969]: 206–207, n. 2). That Vallancey employed the services of the scribe Muiris Ó Gormáin to teach him Irish is well known and often cited in the literature (cf. Ó CUÍV 1986: 416; McCAUGHEY 1967–68: 203; MAC CATHMHAOIL 2013: 27). That Vallancey appears to have made minimal progress in his acquisition of the language is acknowledged less-often (cf. Ó MURAÍLE 2015: 208).

O'Connor's composite manuscript. As noted in *RIA Cat.*, the manuscript is essentially a scrap book of items collected from O'Connor's childhood onwards.²² The Manx and Scottish Gaelic texts have not only been set beside one another in this scrapbook, they are written on the same sized paper and have the appearance of having been folded together at some point prior to binding. Both poems are written on paper bearing a common 'Maid of Holland' watermark with a 'PRO PATRIA' motto.²³ Rev. Charles O'Connor, possibly aware of this, thought both poems to have been written in the same hand, giving the following somewhat acerbic description of the poem in his catalogue of his grandfather's manuscripts:

'Fin and Ossian, a Manx Coronacht'. This is the title of one sheet of paper in the Manx language on one side, with a version in common Irish on the other. It is in the same modern hand and characters with the preceding [*Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill*], and is the composition of some ignorant schoolmaster who blunders *ris* for *re*, and makes Fin and Ossian, and their 300 young women, and their 300 hags, 100 dogs, and 100 whelps, keep company together, whilst the former are cutting faggots with their bill hooks! Perhaps the poems of Ossian are not founded on better authorities (O'CONNOR 1818: 171).

While both hands unmistakably belong to the eighteenth century and do share certain similarities, *RIA Cat.* correctly distinguishes between the hand of the Scottish Gaelic text and that of the Manx text. Further, although both texts are written on paper bearing similar watermarks, a closer examination reveals that the countermarks are in fact distinct. The Manx text is written on paper bearing the countermark of Jan van der Ley, a Dutch papermaker of the eighteenth century, while the *Birlinn* bears that of the famous French papermaker J. Villedary.²⁴ The distinction in the hands and in the paper notwithstanding, it would appear that the both the Manx and the Scottish Gaelic texts are intimately connected in another way, as will now be demonstrated.

The hand of *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill* is that of Rev. James McLagan (1728–1805), the Scottish scholar, clergyman and prolific collector of Gaelic literature.²⁵ This is clear when the text is compared to the McLagan–O'Connor letters

²² I have no knowledge as to when these materials were bound together but they had been arranged and bound in this order by 1818 at the latest, for they are catalogued as such by Rev. Charles O'CONNOR (1818: 171).

²³ For examples, see CHURCHILL (1935: xciii–cxviii).

²⁴ For further information on these paper makers, see GRAVELL & MILLER (1983: 241–242; 230).

²⁵ This Royal Irish Academy text of *Birlinn Chlann Raghnaill* was edited by J.L. CAMPBELL (1961), who was unable to identify the hand. For a fuller discussion of the implications of the identification of McLagan as the scribe in question, see Ó MUIRCHARTAIGH (forthcoming a).

in RIA.²⁶ McLagan spent much of the late 1760s in Ireland as a military chaplain to the 42nd (Royal Highland) Regiment of Foot, better-known in some quarters as the Black Watch, and appears to have been based in Dublin in 1769 and 1770. McLagan soon took advantage of this posting to acquaint himself with a number of Irish scholars and antiquarians with similar Gaelic literary interests. In his letters to O’Conor, McLagan mentions Charles Vallancey, Dr Carpenter (Catholic Archbishop of Dublin),²⁷ and Muiris Ó Gormáin²⁸ by name, indicating that he was firmly ensconced in O’Conor’s Dublin circle of savants, scholars and scribes. McLagan was not to remain in Dublin, however. After spending part of the summer of 1770 in Scotland, he was posted to Belfast and from June 1771 to the Isle of Man.²⁹

While interesting fragments of the McLagan-O’Conor correspondence are preserved among O’Conor’s papers in the Royal Irish Academy, no correspondence between McLagan and Vallancey has survived, as far as I can ascertain. They undoubtedly did correspond, however, and they certainly shared texts of mutual interest. McLagan mentions Vallancey in his letter to O’Conor in the spring of 1771, implying that Vallancey had promised to obtain a copy of Bullet’s Celtic dictionary for him.³⁰ Sim INNES (2016) has also recently presented evidence suggesting that McLagan and Vallancey exchanged texts. For reasons that will now be outlined, one can be confident that Text B of *Fin as Ossian*, and a transliteration into a more ‘Gaelic’ orthography came to Vallancey via McLagan during the summer of 1771, not long after McLagan arrived in the island, and that McLagan was Vallancey’s mysterious ‘correspondent in the Isle of Man’.

²⁶ These letters are contained in RIA MS B i 2.

²⁷ It was around the time of McLagan’s visit to Dublin that Carpenter became archbishop of Dublin. For a useful discussion of Carpenter’s life and career, see MAC GIOLLA PHÁDRAIG (1976).

²⁸ McLagan mentions ‘Gorman’; I take this to be Muiris Ó Gormáin, the Gaelic scribe rather than the Chevalier Thomas O’Gorman. Muiris Ó Gormáin spent much of 1771 in the employ of O’Conor transcribing material in Belanagare (cf. Ní MHUNGHAILÉ 2015: 215; FLOWER 1926: 144). INNES (2016) has recently argued persuasively that material from Ó Gormáin came into McLagan’s possession via Vallancey; material in Ó Gormáin’s hand is also to be found among other papers once belonging to McLagan but not preserved in Glasgow (see Ó MUIRCHARTAIGH, forthcoming b).

²⁹ R.L. THOMSON (1961: 9) suggested that McLagan was stationed as chaplain to the 42nd Regiment in the Isle of Man ‘about the year 1770’ (cf. D.S. THOMSON 1958: 180, n. 1). Reference to the correspondence of McLagan and O’Conor in the Royal Irish Academy (MS B i 2) allows for the more precise date of the middle of June 1771. The letters also confirm that McLagan spent at least the summer of 1770 in Scotland.

³⁰ The publication in question was Jean-Baptiste Bullet’s *Mémoire sur la langue celtique, contenant l’histoire de cette langue et un dictionnaire des termes qui la composent* (Besançon, 1754).

Linguistic Profiling

In order to fully appreciate the history of the ballad, the close textual relationship between Text B and Text M must now be examined. Text M, as we have seen, is in the hand of Rev. Philip Moore, part-translator and general editor of the Manx Bible. Moore is not the scribe of Text B, however, Vallancey is. One could not expect a Manxman of this period to be able to ‘Gaelicize’ the orthography of the Manx original (cf. R.L. THOMSON [1969]: 193–194) and it is clear from both his transcription of the Manx and his attempt to ‘correct the orthography’ that Vallancey did not understand much if any of the original text. One or two examples will suffice to demonstrate this. The opening word of the ballad in Manx *hie* ‘went’ (cf. Irish *chuaigh*; Scottish Gaelic *chaidh*) is rendered into ‘Gaelic’ orthography by Vallancey as *thigh*. Vallancey also misinterprets the past tense of the substantive verb, *va*, copying instead *da*. These features of his copy show that Vallancey did not understand even the most basic parts of the text.³¹ Yet there are other examples of more obscure (to an Irish audience at least) linguistic features of the text which have been faithfully transmitted in Vallancey’s pseudo-Gaelic orthography, suggesting that the transliteration was not entirely the work of Vallancey. The retention of forms like the negative particle *cha* and the preposition *ris* suggests that Vallancey had been sent a transliteration into a more traditional Gaelic orthography which he further ‘corrected’. Alongside *cha* and *ris*, there are a number of other features which suggest that this more traditional orthography was that of Scottish Gaelic rather than Irish:

Jeagh woar ren cheeney orroo as y ghlan near

‘a great smoke spread over them from the glen in the west’

Is relatively accurately transliterated as

Deathach mhor rinn sineadh orra, as a glen n’iar

The word *deatach* ‘smoke’ is disyllabic and retains intervocalic [t] intact in all Irish dialects in which the lexeme is commonly used (cf. WAGNER 1958: 160). This is not the case in Scottish Gaelic, where *deathach* is well-attested (BORGSTRØM 1940: 178; Ó MURCHÚ 1989: 325; cf. McLEOD 2004: 32), corresponding with the situation in Manx (BRODERICK 1984: s.v. *jaagh*). One can also note the occurrence of the grave accent throughout the text, in line with the Scottish Gaelic New Testament of 1767, as indicative of Scottish origins (cf. D.S. THOMSON 1983: 100; BLACK 1994: 134–135). The same can be said for the title given to the Gaelic transliteration; ‘An Gaoidhligh’ is best understood as Scottish Gaelic meaning ‘in Gaelic’. Most clearly indicative of the origins of the text sent to Val-

³¹ I think they are also sufficient to indicate that Vallancey was equally ignorant of the narrative.

lancey are three glosses on Text B, ones which must have been made in a very specific environment. These glosses will now be examined.

Gloss 1

The Manx word *aile* meaning ‘fire’ is glossed as such in our text. Manx does not use a reflex of the Old Irish lexeme *tene* ‘fire’ found as the usual word for ‘fire’ not only in the other Gaelic languages³² but also in Welsh and Breton (cf. WAGNER 1953). This lexeme, *aile*, which WAGNER (1953) noted had strong nasalization of the initial vowel, is, etymologically speaking, identical with an earlier form, *aingel*, meaning ‘light’ or ‘bright’, a lexeme etymologically distinct from but homophonous with the Latin loanword *aingéal* ‘angel’. The former occurs in *Sanas Cormaic* and is glossed *solus nó grianda nó fáilid* ‘light or sunny or joyous’ (MEYER 1913: 8). It has the appearance of a rare lexeme, even in the early period, and *eDIL* (s.v.) only records its use twice, both times in glossaries, a fact which further supports the suggestion that the lexeme was not common. The Manx lexeme *aile* displays the loss of intervocalic <ng>, a phonological development also found in Ulster and Scotland, and is confirmed by the nasalization of the vowel (Ó BAOILL 2001; cf. BRODERICK 1986: 105–6). The use of the lexeme *aingéal* as the usual word for ‘fire’ appears as rare in Modern Irish as in Old Irish (cf. WAGNER 1958: 164). DINNEEN (s.v.) defines it as ‘a burnt out cinder taken from the fire sometimes given in their hands as a protection to children going out at night, is called an *aingéal*, as it is supposed to represent an angel’, a definition which demonstrates how two once distinct lexemes have become conflated in folk etymology. In Scottish Gaelic the situation is perhaps a bit more complex in that there are a number of realisations of the lexeme, none of which is particularly common: The word *aingéal* specifically meaning ‘the fire in a kiln’ was known in South Uist and Skye³³ and Lhuyd recorded it meaning ‘fire’ in Argyll at the very start of the eighteenth century (CAMPBELL and THOMSON 1963: 223–223). Phonologically related *ain* and *aine* are noted by CARMICHAEL (1887: 85) as forms particular to the Western Isles, meaning ‘bright fire, red fire’. DIECKHOFF (s.v. *aingir*) in his dictionary of the dialect of Glengarry notes the related form *aingir* as a word meaning ‘fire’ he further notes that it is ‘not in common conversation’. In short, while certain Gaelic dialects show phonological variations of an original *aingéal* ‘fire’ only in Manx does a form akin to *aile* occur and only in Manx is it the usual generic term for ‘fire’. The evidence indicates clearly, then, that from the Manx orthography, a speaker of Irish or Scottish Gaelic would not be

³² Although there are reflexes of this lexeme in Manx: *çeeney-jee* ‘ringworm’ (BRODERICK 1984: s.v.), cf. *teine-dè* in Scottish Gaelic and *tine dhia* in Irish; *chent* ‘a flash’ (CREGEEN 1835: s.v.).

³³ *Fieldwork Archive, Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic (DASG)*. University of Glasgow <http://www.dasg.ac.uk/fieldwork/?q=aingéal+> [accessed 15 June 2016]. Cf. McDONALD (1958: s.v.).

reasonably expected to be able to decipher the Manx word *aille*. This lexeme is, within a larger Gaelic context, distinctly and exclusively Manx and explains why it is glossed in our text.

Gloss 2

The second gloss on the text consists of the following: ‘spaidh connadh: a bill hook for cutting scrubby or bushwood’. The term *spie choinne* is described by BRODERICK (1990: 59) as ‘a mattock for hooking gorse’, broadly agreeing with the gloss in our text. The specification of a tool used for hooking gorse seems to be reliant on one speaker of Late Spoken Manx (cf. BRODERICK 1984: s.v. *speiy conney*). It may be better to describe it as an implement for cutting firewood more generally as *conney* in Late Spoken Manx incorporates ‘heather, furze, gorse; fuel, firewood’ (cf. BRODERICK 1984: s.v.). The term used in other versions of the ballad is *tuaigh chonnaigh*:

Éirghes Garaidh thall astoigh
Gabhas n-a láimh tuaigh chonnaidh
Do bhain san gcoill gan tséna
Naoi ngúala fuinnsiona imthréna

Garaid arose and went forth from the house: he took in hand the woodman’s axe: he cut in the wood, ’tis past denial nine stout faggots of ash (GWYNN 1904: 18–19).

This initial element, *spie*, is entirely incomprehensible to speakers of Irish and Scottish Gaelic³⁴ and therefore can be viewed as uniquely Manx.

Gloss 3

The third gloss on the text consists of the following: ‘Toltanin: a fabrick in ruins’. The Manx word *tholtan* is described by KELLY (1866: s.v. *tultan*) in his dictionary as meaning ‘a ruin, a decayed house’, it is glossed in our text as ‘a fabrick in ruins’. The lexeme is unknown in Irish and Scottish Gaelic but was common in both Late Spoken Manx (BRODERICK 1984: s.v. *tholtan*) and the Anglo-Manx of the last century (MOORE 1924, s.v. *thalthan*). BRODERICK (1984: s.v. *tholtan*) has been suggested that it is related to older *tolltach* ‘sharp, piercing’ but if so the Manx lexeme shows a significant semantic development not seen in either Scottish Gaelic or Irish.

This linguistic digression is important in elucidating the identity of Vallancey’s ‘correspondent in the Isle of Man’. The fact that words which are common

³⁴ Broderick (1984: s.v. *spoi*; 1990: 59) suggests that this element might be a doublet of *spoiy* ‘castrating’ (cf. Irish *snochadh*). This etymology is far from certain.

in Manx but unknown in Irish and Scottish Gaelic are glossed in the text indicates that whoever sent it was not only drawing on knowledge of Manx, but also on knowledge of Scottish Gaelic and/or Irish. This indicates that the text as sent to Vallancey has its origins in a collaborative effort between a Manx speaker or speakers and someone familiar with Irish or Scottish Gaelic in the Isle of Man. There is no other viable way of accounting for the glosses. Moore had insufficient knowledge of Irish to be aware of what needed to be glossed and Vallancey's mutilated transcription of the original and transliteration into 'Gaelic' orthography indicates that he did not understand it. And yet some features in Vallancey's 'corrected' transliteration of the Manx text betray a Scottish source. These facts lead us back to Rev. James McLagan (1728–1805), a friend of Vallancey and a Scottish-Gaelic speaking clergyman intensely interested in *fiannaigheacht* literature (cf. D.S. THOMSON 1958) who, as already pointed out, was posted to the Isle of Man in the summer of 1771 as a military chaplain to the 42nd Regiment.

The linguistic profile outlined above is supported by the fact that McLagan and Moore, the scribe of Text M, the version most closely related to our Text B, were very well acquainted. John Kelly (1750–1809), scribe of Text W, acted as a copyist, editor and assistant to Moore during the translation of the Manx Bible.³⁵ Kelly would go on to compile a dictionary of Manx, noting the following in his description of the Gaelic languages:

When the Rev. Philip Moore and myself [i.e. Kelly] were engaged in preparing the Manks translation of the Holy Scriptures for the press, the Rev. — McLagan, chaplain to his Majesty's 42nd Regiment of Highlanders, frequently visited us and often assisted us in the recovery or the application of obsolete words ... (KELLY 1866, s.v. *Gaelck*).

McLagan's interests were every bit as literary as they were biblical, however, and these interests were not allowed to fade during his time in the Isle of Man. McLagan was not one to miss an opportunity to add to his already substantial collection of Gaelic literature. R.L. Thomson has noted that:

The traffic between the Gael and the Manxman was not all in one direction ... for if McLagan assisted them ... there is also among McLagan manuscripts [in Glasgow University Library] one piece of evidence that Philip Moore communicated Manx popular verse to their visitor, who had no doubt been inquiring after the oral literature of the island (R.L. THOMSON 1961: 10).

This small Manx manuscript, in the possession of McLagan but in the hand of Philip Moore is preserved in Glasgow University Library (GUL MS Gen 1042/180).³⁶ In light of the evidence of *Fin as Ossian* presented here, this Glasgow

³⁵ For more on Kelly see R.L. THOMSON ([1969]: 185–186; 1987–89).

³⁶ For discussion see R.L. THOMSON (1961).

manuscript may be just the tip of a more substantial iceberg of collaboration. The evidence then points squarely at collaboration between McLagan, Moore and Kelly in the collection of Manx literature and its commitment to writing. This is the context from which Text B emerged. McLagan had met Vallancey the previous year when stationed in Dublin and had no doubt been party to the debates around the veracity of Macpherson's *Ossian* in which both Vallancey and Charles O'Connor were participants (cf. Ó MUIRCHARTAIGH, forthcoming b). The correspondence with both men continued after McLagan had left Dublin.³⁷

The date of the ballad

With a greatly enhanced understanding of the provenance of the existing copies of the ballad, it may now be possible to usefully discuss the question of its date, or more accurately the date it was first collected from oral recitation. BRODERICK (1990: 51) dated Text W and M to circa '1762/1763'.³⁸ That date is entirely reliant on the following account of Peter John Heywood (1739–1790) communicated to Grimur Thorkelin in October 1789:

Several years ago, when the first Edition of the Poem of Fingal and Ossian by Mr. McPherson appeared, a Revd. Clergyman of my acquaintance, (since deceased) was then at the Bishop's Country Seat [Bishop's Court] in this Isle, engaged with one of the Vicar's Genl in revising and correcting a translation of the Scriptures into the Manx Language, and telling the Vicar Genl. of that new production (of which he read him some Episodes in the hearing of the Bishop's Gardiner, an old Man, who was at work near the Door of their Laboratory and listening. He stept in on hearing frequent mention of Fingal and Oshian & Cuchullin &c and told him he knew who could sing a good song about those men & C[u]chullin, and that was his Brother's Wife, a very antient Woman. (on which they sent for the old Dame, who very readily sung them eight or ten verses which my friend immediately took down in writing, and the next day on recollection she bro[ugh]t them the rest, and of which he obliged me with a copy My friend asked her, wher she learned this song, and she said from her Mother & Grandmother & many more (that they used to sing them at their work and wheels ... (quoted in BRODERICK 1990: 52; cf. BL Add. 11215).

Macpherson published *Fragments of ancient poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Gaelic or Erse language* in 1760 and this

³⁷ For discussion of the relationship between McLagan and Vallancey after the latter's departure from Ireland, see INNES (2016).

³⁸ In doing so he follows FLOWER (1926: 605) who states that '[t]his seems to have been in 1762, when the Rev. Philip Moore and the Rev. Matthias Curghey (Vicar General) were at work on the translation of the Bible'.

was followed by others.³⁹ Taking Heywood's account at face value, BRODERICK (1990: 52) dated the collection of the ballad to 1762 or 1763. The comments of Heywood, however, relate to Text T. If Text T did indeed come to Heywood directly from Moore it seems likely that it did so much later than 1771. There is certainly an attraction in the suggestion that all versions of the ballad have their ultimate origin in a single encounter with 'the old Dame', however, similar to that described by Heywood, not least because all extant copies bear a version of the same title: *Fin as Ossian*. Nonetheless there is reason to doubt much of the other details provided by Heywood.⁴⁰

The clergyman described in Heywood's account is obviously Rev. Philip Moore, the scribe of Text M, of which our Text B is most likely a copy. Moore, as already pointed out, was responsible for the translation of the Bible into Manx. The identity of the second clergyman mentioned in the account is not so certain.⁴¹ Such is the vagueness of Heywood's description of the episode that I do not believe one can pin down a date for the events described in the letter. If, however, one assumes that all manuscript copies of the ballad have their origin in a single encounter similar to that described by Heywood in his letter to Thorkelin, then it may be that James McLagan, Philip Moore and John Kelly were all present. Would it have been possible for a native Manx-speaker in the eighteenth century to have been completely unaware the existence of Ossianic lore on the island? This is the scenario implied by Heywood in his letter to the Icelandic antiquarian. The survival of remnants of Ossianic material in Manx oral culture into the twentieth century would surely argue against any such interpretation of the admittedly meagre evidence. Moore and his Manx clerical counterparts may not have been able to recite Ossianic ballads in Manx but is it not farfetched to suggest they would not know of their existence? It is easier to imagine that the type of encounter described by Heywood could have been brought about by the presence of the inquisitive McLagan, who within a matter of months of his arrival on the island was already communicating its Ossianic lore to Vallancey. McLagan's reference, reported by Vallancey in the latter's

³⁹ For a useful outline of Macpherson's subsequent publications see GASKILL (2004: xviii–xix).

⁴⁰ One further reason to doubt Heywood's account may be that he claims the source of the ballad was 'an old dame'. Traditionally, in Ireland at least, *fiannaigheacht* material seems to have been the preserve of men, although not exclusively so (cf. Ó DUILEARGA 1942: 43). If Heywood's account in this regard is accurate, however, it challenges the traditional interpretation of the *fiannaigheacht* genre as being the preserve of men, at least as far as the Isle of Man is concerned. One can also note the following observation of Edward Faragher (1831–1908), the last native writer of Manx, and a source of much Manx folklore: 'I have heard an old woman saying when I was a child something about Fin McCooil, but I've forgotten most of it. It was a bit like a song; she would sing it to the children to keep them quiet ... It seemed to me that the kids were afraid of Fin MacCooil' (translated in BRODERICK 1982: 171).

⁴¹ BRODERICK (1990: 52) assumes it was the Rev. James Wilks (1719–1777) although no evidence for this being the case is presented.

letter to Charles O'Connor, stated that 'there is more in the hands of some old people in the island'. This comment does not indicate that Moore had amassed a collection of verse before McLagan's arrival in the island.

With the central role of McLagan in the collection of the ballad *Fin as Ossian* now secure, one can return to Text W, the text now known to be in the hand of John Kelly. One of the most notable differences between Text W and all others is the exclusive use of the name *Gorree* in Text W where Text T uses *Orree*, or a variation there of, exclusively (x5), and Text M has four instances of *Orree* and one instance of *Goree*. The fact that Garadh mac Morna, a legendary character of the *fian*, became conflated with Godred Crovan, an early king of Mann, has already been noted. The exclusive use of *Gorree* (as opposed to *Orree*) in Text W is unusual and one may well ask if the scribe was aware that in the greater part of the Gaelic world the character in question was Garadh, with initial <G>. There is, of course, only one relevant person that would have had that knowledge at his disposal.⁴² McLagan was intimately familiar with the Scottish Gaelic ballad; there are two different Scottish Gaelic versions of the ballad in his collection, now preserved in Glasgow University Library.⁴³ One need only recall John Kelly's description of McLagan having helped Kelly and Moore 'in the recovery of obsolete words' to see clearly the context in which *Orree* might be 'restored' to *Gorree*.⁴⁴

McLagan was a remarkable character, so much so that his is, I believe, a unique achievement. He had been collecting Gaelic ballads and songs as early as the 1750s so that by the time Macpherson was thinking about publishing his works, McLagan was already acknowledged as a leading expert on Gaelic oral literature.⁴⁵ Everywhere McLagan went he sought out texts of songs and poetry; his Scottish collection is the most extensive, for obvious reasons, but he also collected material in Ireland and the Isle of Man (INNES 2016; THOMSON 1961; Ó MUIRCHARTAIGH forthcoming b). For these reasons, it is unthinkable that McLagan would not have taken advantage of an opportunity to obtain 'a fragment of Ossian' in the summer of 1771. If my interpretation of the evidence is valid, then Texts B and M are to be dated to the second half of 1771, by which

⁴² It has already been noted above that Vallancey displayed a remarkable ignorance of both the narrative and language of the ballad.

⁴³ GUL Gen MS 1042/82 contains 22 quatrains bearing the rather long title *Oran a rinnead air na Fionnaibh an uair a Dhagadh Garrie maille re Mnaibh na feine an ann Tigh Thormaig agus a loisg è an Tigh nan Tiomchìol*; GUL Gen MS 1042/95 is simply titled *Tigh Formail* and consists of 26 quatrains (see D.S. THOMSON 1958). The second of these has been printed in CAMERON (1892: 352–355).

⁴⁴ For discussion of a similar sort of 'restoration' on the part of Kelly and Moore, apparently on account of McLagan, see R.L. THOMSON (1961: 9). This relates to the use of *muc-awin* (literally meaning 'river-pig') in the Manx Bible where English 'bear' is intended. This Thomson attributes to McLagan's suggestion of *mathghamhain* (as found in Bedell).

⁴⁵ See James Macpherson's letters to McLagan published in SAUNDERS (1968: 146–147).

time McLagan had taken up residence in the Isle of Man. Text W most likely dates from not long after and probably represents a version which was akin to Texts M and B but which has undergone some editorial revision, possibly with input from McLagan, and the addition of five further lines at the end of the ballad. Text T which is greatly elaborated appears to represent this original version of the ballad after having been added to by subsequent informants and/or redactors in the two decades between McLagan's arrival on the island and Heywood's letter to Thorkelin. This scenario is suggested by the fact that all versions of the poem use the title *Fin as Ossian* (spelt *Oshian* in the case of Text T) and by Heywood's claim that the ultimate source of Text T was Philip Moore.⁴⁶

Conclusion

The limited size of the Manx corpus of *fiannaigheacht* literature might lead one to believe that the genre did not enjoy the same popularity in the Gaelic-speaking Isle of Man that it so obviously did in Ireland and Scotland. The discussion of the ballad here, however, cautions against such a reading of the evidence. The literary output of the Isle of Man throughout the entire eighteenth century is if not exclusively then certainly overwhelmingly religious (cf. BRODERICK 2007). It is remarkable that any secular literature at all was preserved. Of that extant secular literature, *fiannaigheacht*, it could be argued, is appropriately represented relative to the Irish and Scottish material.

The arrival of a charismatic, energetic and learned Scottish Gaelic-speaking clergyman in the Isle of Man accounts for the preservation of the present ballad and others (cf. R.L. THOMSON 1961). McLagan had, by the time of his posting in the Isle of Man, amassed a wealth of knowledge of *fiannaigheacht* literature (in both Irish and Scottish Gaelic) which has hardly been matched, before or since. His presence in the Isle of Man is likely to have had an invigorating effect. It now seems likely that the arousal of interest in Manx secular literature in the early 1770s (cf. BRODERICK 2007: 41) was directly connected with the presence of a major collector of Gaelic literature in the Isle of Man from the summer of 1771 onwards. McLagan's role in this Manx enterprise is, like so many other aspects of his varied career, deserving of further analysis.⁴⁷

This re-examination of *Fin as Ossian* has shed significant light on the history not only of this ballad but on an important period in the history of secular literature in Manx. It is especially worth recalling that the observations made here would not be possible but for the presence of this single ballad among

⁴⁶ This seems to have been acknowledged more recently by BRODERICK (2007: 41) who states that '[t]he manuscript [*sic*] dates from ca. 1770', although the reasons for this change of heart are not specified. Further examination of the process by which Text T was 'elaborated' would prove worthwhile.

⁴⁷ I intend to discuss McLagan's role in the preservation of Manx secular literature more generally elsewhere in the near future.

the papers of Charles O'Connor. The text examined here, in the hand of an Anglo-Irish antiquarian, is preserved among the papers of an Irish historian and Gaelic scholar, but was collected by a Scottish collector in collaboration with at least two Manxmen. The circumstances of its collection and preservation shed further light on the complex intricate personal networks of antiquarians and native scholars which throughout the late eighteenth century salvaged so much Gaelic literary heritage from ruin. Further, the story of *Fin as Ossian* emphasises, once again, the extent to which so many aspects of Gaelic language, literature and culture from Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man shed mutual light on one another and are often only best examined in their fuller, pan-Gaelic, context.

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