**FIN AS OSHIN**

The Manx Gaelic traditional song *Fin as Oshin* ‘Fin and Ossian’, the only known piece of *Fianaighe acht* from the Manx song tradition, exists in three manuscripts, M, W, T.

Manuscript M appears to be in the hand of the Rev. Philip Moore (1705–1783), chiefly known as part-translator and general editor of the Manx Bible. Under the title ‘A Manx *ronag* ¹ Fin & Ossian’ the text extends to twenty-seven lines and was published in facsimile (the whereabouts of the original manuscript is now not known) by G. W. Wood (1920:296–301). According to Wood (ibid.:297) M is ‘written on the back of a leaf of an old book’. Lower down the page he adds, ‘It is written on thick hand-made paper. On the reverse side is a boy’s Latin exercise written in half text, with the [last] two [ . . . ] lines of the [ . . . ] poem scribbled between two of the lines’. Also published in facsimile form by Wood in the same article is an English translation of the poem, also seemingly in Moore’s hand, but, according to Wood (ibid.:299), on thinner paper. The translation contains additional material not in the text of M, but found in W (see below).

Manuscript W, preserved in Manx Museum ms 1487(d)C, is of about the same date as M (c.1762/3; but see below) and is written on both sides of locally-made paper in a flowing hand; the hand is unknown. The text runs to twenty-nine lines, the last being inserted at a slightly later date by a different hand. The whole is entitled ‘Fin as Ossian a Song’. As noted above, W contains four additional lines of text not in M, but which are represented in the English version of M. W has no accompanying English translation. The text in W was printed by Wood (with English translation) also in the aforementioned article. The G. W. Wood Collection, of which W is part (as was M, it seems) was deposited in the Manx Museum Archive in 1923, according to the accession register.

Manuscript T, British Library Add. 11215 (Thorkelin Collection), contains forty-one lines of text under the title ‘Fin as Osshin, or Fin-gal and Ossian, a Mank’s [sic] Poem’ and is in the hand of Peter John Heywood (1739 – Feb. 1790). The text is accompanied by a spirited,
if somewhat loose, English translation along with some notes on the contents of the poem. Appended is a letter (addressee not mentioned, but see below) signed by Heywood giving details of the song's collection (see below) and dated Isle of Mann [sic], 25 October 1789. This manuscript is accompanied by four other Manx songs (three in English with Manx versions and one in Manx only) all in Heywood's hand and seemingly sent to the Danish scholar and natural historian Professor Thorkelin of Copenhagen at his request. Thorkelin's manuscripts, BL Add. 11215 along with BL Add. 11061–11251, were purchased by the British Museum from Professor Finn Magnusson in July 1837. How or when Magnusson came into possession of the manuscripts is not known.

Together with all the accompanying material to do with the Fin as Oshin song was twice printed by A. W. Moore (1886:80–84; 1896:1–5).

All versions of the poem make it clear that after every line of verse a vocable refrain of the English/Scottish/Irish ballad type, viz. Fal-lal-lo(a), Fal-lal-la (or leu), was sung or chanted.

The apparent circumstances surrounding the collection of the song are given by Heywood himself in his letter (to Thorkelin):

Several years ago, when the first Edition of the Poem of Fingal and Ossian by Mr. McPherson appeared [1761/2], a Revd. Clergyman of my acquaintance [Rev. Philip Moore], (since deceased) was then at the Bishop's Country Seat [Bishop's Court] in this Isle, engaged with one of the Vicar's Genl [Rev. James Wilks (1719–77)] 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 kept in on hearing frequent mention of Fingal and Ossian & Cuchullin &c and told him he knew who could sing a good song about those men & C[uchullin], 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

5Possibly by John Kelly (1750–1809), an early and apparently enthusiastic pupil of the Rev. Philip Moore and amanuensis of the Manx Bible (Moore 1901:94–5; Thomson 1979:v). He was the author of a Manx grammar (1854) and dictionary (1866).
6viz. 'Euboria's praise', 'Scarlett rocks', 'The little quiet nation' (songs originally in English by Archdeacon, later Bishop, Samuel Rutter of Man between 1642 and 1651 with Manx versions supplied at the time or a little later (Moore 1896:xiv) and a version of the Manx Gaelic traditional song Mylecharne.
7According to Townley (1791:156), Townley met Thorkelin on 18 July 1789 during the latter's visit to Man that summer to conduct some research at the behest of the Danish monarch, it seems, on the Scandinavian elements of Manx archaeology, etc. It is likely that Thorkelin also met Heywood during that same visit. According to Feltham (1798:52), Thorkelin was also given some Scandinavian coins, possibly from the Lornan Treasure of 1784.
recollection she brought them the rest, and of which he obliged me with a copy [...]. My friend asked her, where she learned this song, and she said from her Mother & Grandmother & many more— that they used to sing them at their work and wheels [...].

The name of the informant is not known. According to Moore (1901:27) Wilks was not appointed vicar general till 1769. However, Heywood was writing twenty years or more after the event and may have been unaware, or had forgotten, the date of Wilks’s appointment. The song could therefore either have been collected c.1762/3 or after 1769. If the former, Moore and company were engaged on the New Testament (published in 1767); if the latter, on the Old Testament (published in 1771–2).

Fin as Oshin was not the only Manx Volkslied apparently to have come to light from oral tradition as a result of MacPherson’s controversial publications; several others also belong to this corpus. However, this seems to be the only example recorded from Manx tradition as having any connection with the Gaelic ‘heroic cycle’ of sagas etc., albeit in fragmentary form. The Gorree/Orry Beg in the song probably refers to Godred Crovan, king of Man and the Hebrides (c.1079–95) and founder of a native dynasty in Man that lasted till 1265. Crovan is known in Manx tradition as Ree Gorré (‘King Orry’ in English) and is seemingly regarded in the tradition as something of a legendary hero. The association of his name with Neolithic burial sites in the parishes of Lonan and Maughold, for example, would seem to confirm this. His inclusion therefore in a ‘heroic’ poem would not be out of place, and would lend a Manx ‘twist’ to a tradition also known elsewhere in the Gaelic world.


10 Beg here would be diminutive of endearment rather than of physical stature, cf. Manannan Beg Mac y Leirr (G. Manannán [Beg] Mac a hí) of MB; the diminutive ending -án, as it seems to be, has been reinforced in the Manx version.

11 According to Manx tradition, as recorded in MB, Ree Gorré landed at the Lhen [in Jurby parish] and became King of Man. Thereupon he introduced law into the island, and from him there descended thirteen kings before Man was taken over (in 1265) by King Alexander III (1249–86) of Scotland. Depending on how one views the period of the Crovan dynasty (c.1079–1265) is the number of kings who ruled in Man and the Hebrides (all or part). However, including temporary regents and suzerainty by outsiders (e.g. Magnus Barefoot, 1098–1103; Somerled, 1158–64; Hákon Hákonsson, 1258–42) we find that the total number comes to thirteen, and in this respect at least MB preserves a sound tradition.

The Chronicles of Man (s.a. 1056; edition 1079) inform us that Godred Crovan made two abortive landings in Man before his successful one at Ramsey. The reference in MB to a landing at the Lhen would refer to a prior abortive landing.

12 i.e. King Orry’s Grave, near Laxey, and Cashtal Ree Gorree (otherwise known as Cashtal yn Arad) in Maughold.

13 This poem is a variant of the story of ‘The burning of Fionn’s house’ in which the hero Garadh/Garaidh is (in some versions) put to death, as in the Manx tale...
The text itself admits of a series of mainly dactylic jambic couplets (of somewhat irregular metre in MW, though this would not necessarily be noticed when sung). 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. The longer and more polished text of T, where the story seems better preserved, rather than its being a further recollection from the same informant (as MW), as noted by Heywood above, is regarded as a totally separate version from a different informant, though perhaps stimulated by the discovery of MW. W may be the copy for Heywood referred to above. Whatever the provenance of T, the manuscript of M, given the fact that it was written down on the back of a pupil’s Latin exercise, even allowing for the scarcity and cost of paper at that time, was almost certainly written down from dictation or performance on the first thing that came to hand, and so seems more likely to be the original than a copy.

In view of the shortness of the text, it is felt desirable to print all three versions diplomatically for reference, the translation for M serving also for W; T is separately translated. Interpolations in the text are printed in italics.

Text M

A Manx ronag

Hie Fin as Ossian magh Lhaa dy Helg – Fala-loo as Fala-lee
Cha rou ad Doinney ayn, sloo ny keayd – Fa &
Qui da Daag ad ec y Thie, agh Orree beg – fa &c
Daag ec y Thie da-chead Coo as da-chead Quellan – fa

As three cheed Ben aag & three head shen Challagh

Doort Innee Fin rish Innee Ossian – Fala &c
Cre’s nee mad Craid rish yn Roiee Gorree – fa &c
Kianle mad yn Oll echey dys ny Cleayn – fa &c
As karree mad yn alle dys y Chassyn – fa &c

Clisht dy dug Orrey beg as – fal &c
Dennee yn smuir ree as y Chass – fal &c
Hie Orree beg magh roish son ny kellgym – fal &c
As y Spie-Choinnee er y Gheallin – fa &c
Hoght bout moarey hug Eh lesh as falla-loo & fa &c

As hoght Cannonyn ayns dagh Bart – fa &c
Hug eh bart ayns dagh Unniag & dagh Dorrys – fal
Agh er mean y laar hug eh yn Bart Sollys – fal
Va Fin as Ossian sy tra shooh shelg – fal &c

(cf. Christiansen 1931:35, 342, also 214; Campbell 1872:175–80; Gwyrm 1904:13; cf. also Murphy 1953:12). Because of the similarity of the name, Gorree has replaced Garadh/Garaidh in the Manx version.
Fin as Oshin

Cha row Doinney ayn sloo ny Keayd – fal &c
[20] Jeagh woar ren lheeney orroo as y ghlen neayr – fal &c
As Lheenee orroo ny smoo lesh y Ghea – fal &c
Ree Fin as ree Ossian Derrey d’aase Ossian skee – fal
Agh Fin moar hene sodjey chum rish ree – fal
Dullee Fin rish Ossian Gra dy trome – fal &c
[25] Cha vel fagit ain agh tollanyn follum lome – fal

[Then scribbled between two lines of Latin text on reverse side:]

Spheer liam dy mie quoi ren ny trickyn shoh
Agh Orry Beg eh daag shin ec y thie

Text W

Fin as Ossian a Song
Hie Fin as Ossian magh Lhaa dy Heilg
Ha row ad Doiney ayr sloo ny Chead
Quoi daag ad eg y Thie agh Gorrey beg
Doort Inneen Fin rish Inneen Ossian
[5] Crys ney mayd Craaid myah Ree Gorrey
Kiangle mayd y Olt seose gys ny Chlein
As Greese mayd yn Ile magh gys y Ell
Moosteey dy dug Gorrey beg ass
Dennee eh yn Smuirr roie ass y Chass
Hie Gorrey beg er son ny Cheillagh
As y Speiih Chonnee er y Gheallyn
Hoght Bhuirh hug eh lesh ass
Hoght Chonnanyen va ayns dagh Bart
Hug eh Bart ayns dagh Innhag
As Bart ayns dagh Dorrys
[10] Er main y Lhaare hug eh’n Bart Sollys
Va Fin as Ossian rish y Tra shoh sheilg
As ha row ad Doiney ayr sloo ny Chead
Jeagh woar haink orroo as y ghlen Nhear
As lhean ec orroo as lesh y Ghea
[15] Roie Fin as roie Ossian
Tra va Ossian skee beign da soie
Agh Fin moar hene sodjey chum rish roie
dullee Fin back gys Ossian
Cha vel ayns shoh agh Tollanyn follym
Quoi ren ny Trickyn shoh agh Gorrey beg
Chossyn eh vow ayns Thoul fo Chregg
Cha row ad able Gorrey beg y gheddin ass
Agh Phluck ad eh magh er Chass
Fin and Ossian went out to hunt one day / They were no fewer than a hundred men / Whom did they leave at home but Orry Beg / (They) left at the house two hundred hounds and two hundred pups / and three hundred young women and three hundred old hags / Fin’s daughter said to Ossian’s daughter / How shall we make game of King Orry? / Let's tie his hair to the harrows / and apply the fire to his feet / Orry Beg suddenly shot up / (as soon as) he felt the marrow running out of his foot / Orry Beg made for the woods / with his gorse hoe on his shoulder / Eight huge loads he brought out with him / and eight bundles in each load / He placed a load in each window and each door / and in the middle of the floor he placed the brightly burning load / Meanwhile Fin and Ossian were hunting / They were no fewer than a hundred men / Thick smoke flooded over them from the glen from the west / and flooded over them all the more with the wind / Fin ran and Ossian ran till Ossian grew tired / but Fin Moor himself kept on running longest / Fin shouted to Ossian, speaking mournfully / we’ve nothing left but desolate ruins / I know for sure who has played these tricks / (it is) Orry Beg whom we left at the house.

Translation of additional material in W

He got away from them in a hold under a rock / They weren’t able to get Orry Beg out / but they dragged him out by his foot / With wild horses then they tore him to death.

Text T

Fin as Osshin, or Fingal and Ossian, a Mank’s Poem

Hie Fin as Osshin magh dy helg, Fal-lal-lo as fal-lal-la
Lesh Sheshighit trean as moadee elg
Cha row ayn Dooinney sloo ny keayd
Coshe cha beaue, cha row ny lheid

[5] Lesh feedjyn cooh, eisht, hie ad magh
Trooid Sfieiu as Coan, dy yannooc cragh
Quoi daag adh ec y thie, agh Orree beg
Cadley dy kiun, foh scadoo’n Chreg
Daag adh ec y thie
Three feed Quiallan, as three feed cooh

[10] As three feed Khiallin Aig, yin annan slooh
Lesh three feed shen Challiagh, dy yeeaghyn moooh
Doort Inneen Fin, ayn Craid as Corree
Cre’s you mad nish Culleen er Orree?
Fin and Ossian went out to hunt / with a valiant band (of men) and hunting dogs / They were no fewer than a hundred men / so swift of foot there was none like them / with scores of hounds, then, they went out / through mountain and glen to cause destruction / Whom did they leave at the house but Orry Beg / sleeping calmly under the rock's shadow / They left at home three score pups and three score hounds / and three score maidens and not one less / with three score old hags to look after them / Said Fin's daughter in disdain and resentment / How can we get our revenge on Orry? / Said Ossian's daughter, we'll bind him tight by the hair of his head to the harrow / and we'll bring fire to bear to his foot so valiant / Suddenly leaping up, then, did Orry get away / as soon as he felt the marrow running out of his foot / cursing bitterly that he would destroy them / who had slighted the king's son / swearing angrily by sun and moon / to burn them and their houses as well / Orry Beg went out to the mountains / with a great gorse hoe on his shoulder / Eight huge heavy loads did he bring with him, it's true / Eight bundles tightly bound in each load / Eight men of the sort that exist in
the world as it is now / could not lift one of these bundles / In every window
he placed a load and in every door / and in the middle of the great house itself
the huge brightly burning load / Fin and Ossian were now busily hunting / with all their warriors in sweat and dust / Thick smoke flooded over them
out of the glen from the west / rising in terrible clouds, as was true / Fin ran
and Ossian ran till Ossian grew tired / Then Fin called to him in a heavy
voice / There's nothing left here now but bare ruins / Who committed this
destruction? Was it not Orry Beg? / He had got away from them
fleeing into the cave under the rock / where choked by the smoke they dragged him out
by his feet.

NOTES TO M

2. Char ayn Dooinney: this is a conflation of two constructions – (in
standard orthography) char ayn dooinney (as in T) 'there was not a
man' or char ayn ad dooinney 'they were not a man (less . . . )'.
3. W. Gorrey (cf. Ir. Go(f)reidh < ON 'Gudrørðr'), the form spelt with G being
older. The form without G would be due to misplaced juncture where one
explosion does for two and the word division comes after instead of between
in the English title 'King Gorrey/King Orry', viz. /kig/ # /gori/ > /kig /
# /ori/ > /kig# /ori/; cf. 'Kirk Onchan' (nowadays simply 'Onchan'), earlier 'Kirk Conchan' Manx Skyl Connaghyn (a parish name), here with a
voiceless velar.
4. ba-cheed: the presence of ch in the orthography (if credible), representing
/x/, cf. also gh for /g/ elsewhere, suggests that lenition of /k/ and /g/ in
places where it is expected is still intact at this date. Though cf. the title
of the Manx Bible itself Yn Vible Casherick where the orthography does
not represent an expected lenition of the adjective. Initial velar spirants
were beginning to disappear at this date.
5. three cheed: lenition is normally expected after tree 'three' in classical
Manx and is regularly attested in the Manx Bible. All Biblical examples
have the singular of the noun when such occurs after kee an 'hundred' and
its compounds.
6. Inneen Fin: The failure of the knition of f in the dependent genitive is
also paralleled in Ir. and Sc.G.
7. Ore's nee mad Craid rish: crys 'how' is neither a literary standard nor a
Late Manx form, though it is regularly found in non-standard orthography.
The idiom with craid is usually janneo craid er, mysh 'mock, humiliate'.
The appearance of rish in M may have been a mis-hearing for mysh, as in
W.
8. Kianle mad: note the use of the future here to denote the jussive sub-
jective or imperative 'let us bind'; cf. keere mad 'let us apply' in line
9. Yn Olt echey: (W y Olt with expected lenition of f after e 'his'). The
lenition of olt (usually masc.) here in M is likely a mixture of e olt and
the periphrastic construction yn olt echey.
12. son ny kellgyn, with g representing /cg/ not exceptionally in non-standard
orthography.
son may represent something older, cf. Phillips ghon 'towards, to' G. (do)
chum + gen., Ir. chun, with reduction in Manx to hon and radical restored
wrongly. This seems the only explanation of cur son y theshill 'give birth to', literally 'bring into the world'.

W er son ny Cheillagh 'towards the wood'. Note the unusual gen. in /ax/, showing lenited velar inflection, probably on the analogy of other palatal liquids; cf. Sc.G. machair, gen. mach(a)rach, Manx magher, old gen. magheragh; cf. also thiabbee 'bed', old gen. thiabbagh. Gen. survival here after son = chun or (ar) son.

13. Spie-Choonnee 'a mattock for hooking gorse'. Speiy may be a doublet of spoy, cf. Ir. spochadh 'castrating', i.e. 'the gorse castrater'.

14. Right burt moarey: plural of monosyllabic adjective commonly found at this period; but cf. the singular form in T line 28.

17. yn Birt Sollys: sollys in Manx is only an adjective, the noun being sollysud or (with a different sense in many cases) solshay, Ir. solise. The sense would be 'brightly burning, flaming'.

21. As theenee orroo, i.e. as theein ee orroo 'and it (the smoke) flooded over them'. Note the 3rd sg. fem. of the pronoun to represent jaagh 'smoke', a feminine noun. This is rare, even in Classical Manx.

23. Agh Fin moar hene sodjey chum rish ree, cf. G. ach Fionn Mór fein as fiside a chum ri rath. The construction with a compared adjective attached to its antecedent is rare even at this date, possibly because it is a construction that is not often required; cf. the Welsh construction gwr mwyaf a garaf.

25. Jobum lome, usually follyn lhome, recalls the phrase follyn-fasse 'desolate', cf. Ir. go follamh fás 'quite empty'. So far as is known, it is not otherwise attested in Manx.

26 (W). jo Chregg 'under stone'. For the occurrence of jo + lenition in Manx see Broderick (1984a:166 n. 1b).

NOTES TO T

4. cha row ny theid, i.e. . . . nyn theid 'their like' cf. Sc.G. an leithid. The reduction of nyn to ny before uneciplasable consonants is fairly common in non-standard spelling in Manx and is parallel to the singular article in similar phonetic situations.

5. feidyn: the orthography here implies the voiced affricate /dy/ representing the plural of the old acc./dat. fichid, vis. ficheadan. The standard feidyn could represent either ficheadan or fichead.  

10. annan 'one' /anann/. This form is, so far as we know, nowhere else attested in the literature. It is found in speech from the northern part of Man only, see Broderick 1984c.

11. dy yeaaghyn mooch 'to look after them' (G. *do dheuchann mutha). The Manx version is not as English as modern Sc.G. ag cosnhead an déidh or Ir. ag amhare in déidh.

13. myr neer 'as is/was true' cf. Ir. mar fhíor. Exists in Manx as myr beer, Ir. mar ab fhíor, with past tense of copula.

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GEORGE BRODERICK

*Universitä Mannheim*