James Macpherson's Ossian Poems, Oral Traditions, and the Invention of Voice

James Mulholland

The Invention of Voice and the Intimacy of the Oral Text

When James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Galic or Erse Language* appeared in 1760, it was greeted with widespread approval. Macpherson's collection purported to translate the work of Ossian, a semi-mythical third-century C. E. Scottish bard in the mold of Homer, who preserved his culture's traditions in song. The claim that this collection was the "genuine remains of ancient Scottish poetry" attracted passionate adherents (Macpherson 1966:A2). For nationalistic Scots, Ossian provided a tantalizing image of an advanced culture comparable to and contemporaneous with those of classical Greece and Rome. For many English authors, Ossian served as an example of native British creativity that superseded the neoclassicism of the early eighteenth century.[1] Thomas Gray declared, for example, that he was in "extasie" after reading the Ossian poems and characterized Macpherson as a thrilling "demon" of poetry (Gray 1935:ii, 680). This "extasie" partly inspired Gray to compose his own imitations of Norse and Celtic folktales. Ossian's popularity traveled widely outside of Great Britain; prominent literary and political figures, including the German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Thomas Jefferson, and Napoleon Bonaparte offered enthusiastic assessments of the sentimentality and humanity that they saw in the poems.

The fervor of such readers was met with equally forceful skepticism. Many critics suggested that Macpherson fabricated Ossian and forged his poems to succeed in a literary marketplace that had largely ignored his earlier publications.[2] Samuel Johnson unequivocally asserted that the poems cannot be "genuine remains" because, he believed, it was impossible for oral transmission to preserve poetry of any considerable length or cultural traditions of any complexity (Johnson and Boswell 1984:113-14). He argued that they were "too long to have been remembered" by an ancient people who, he thought, had not developed writing and therefore must have been uncivilized (Johnson 2000:637-38). He insinuated that the Scots' desire

---

[1] For the most complete consideration of this "native" British tradition, see Weinbrot 1993.

[2] For a description of these assessments, see Stafford 1988:40-60, 79-80.

to reclaim ancient traditions, and thus neutralize the intense English colonialism that followed the failed Jacobite uprising in 1745, made them susceptible to Macpherson's cunning forgery.

Controversies over the legitimacy of Macpherson's Ossian poems are an essential part of their literary reception and cultural meaning. These persistent debates, however, obscure the role that Macpherson plays in the emergence of modern British poetic voice. Macpherson's Ossian is more than an example of native creativity or Scottish nationalism; the Ossian poems are the best-known instance of a wider tendency shared by many mid- and late eighteenth-century authors to make oral traditions—considered politically and geographically marginal to civilized Britain—central to the period's most innovative poetic experiments. These experiments sought out alternate modes of inspiration in folk culture as a way to counteract what Susan Stewart calls the eighteenth century's crisis in authenticity (Stewart 1991:105). Enlightenment Britain is often associated by modern scholars with the emergence of a viable literary marketplace and the category of the professional writer.[3] But many authors felt that the impersonality and rationality of the marketplace increasingly disconnected them from their readers and eroded the vibrancy of their creative imagination. Authors like Gray, Macpherson, William Collins, Robert Burns, and Felicia Hemans, among many others, responded to this crisis by encompassing oral traditions and embodying its voices within their printed texts. Oral voices presented models of authentic speech that defused the sense that authors were anonymous and distanced from their readers. They were so appealing, therefore, because they promoted an image of artistic expression based on the shared intimacy of communal relationships and the immediacy of face-to-face contact. Collins, for example, depicts the speaker of his 1749 "An Ode to a Friend on his Return &c" as a medium for the songs of ancient Scottish bards whose voices he records in his text and transmits to English readers (Lonsdale 1977:167-73; 52-58). Collins insinuates that by reading his poem the audience is able to "hear" these bards sing again. Thematizing the English poem as a conduit for bards' voices also structures Gray's 1757 "The Bard. A Pindaric Ode," in which he imitates the prosody of Welsh oral poetry, thereby impersonating the bardic voice while distinguishing it from other voices in the poem through quotation marks, tense shifts, and metrical variation. Gray attempts to reform the way that authors and readers relate through texts by offering them an aural experience of the bardic past.[4] These idealized depictions of oral performance as collective belonging are an alternative to the detached feeling associated with print circulation.

Eighteenth-century authors resolve this feeling of detachment by developing "printed voices" that try to transfer to the text the passion, the wildness, and the sense of connection that they perceive to exist in oral performance. The term "printed voice" refers to the process whereby readers create a voice during the act of reading that renders the lines of the poem as verbal enunciations. This voice is not the same as the author's speaking voice, but is an essential

---

[3] See Zionkowksi 2001:1-23 and Hess 2005:1-34. Zionkowski discusses the "professionalization" of authorship and the rejection of the marketplace by certain authors, like Gray, and the embracing of the marketplace by others, like Johnson (23).

[4] For a fuller exposition of this argument, see Mulholland 2008.

part of the imaginative act that aims to turn readers into auditors.[5] By transforming the content of folk traditions and by approximating the perceived effects of oral voice in their printed poems, authors position themselves as mediators of oral cultures' authenticity. Printed voices, however, cannot duplicate the advantages of embodied performance and vocalized sound. Instead, authors must simulate presence, which requires that they generate literary and typographical techniques alert to the representation of different voices.

The Ossian poems are an essential turning point in this century-long experiment. Within the complicated interaction of oral performance and printed media, Macpherson elevates the storytelling traditions of the Highlands to the level of impassioned art. While Macpherson claims that he uncovers and translates the traditions of Scotland, examining the Ossian poems as a printed object reveals that he actually reconstructs these traditions by using literary devices such as personification, mode of address, and diacritical indicators like quotations marks. He then fashions printed voices that emulate bardic speech and the intimacy of their implied audiences. The narrative style of the *Fragments*, and of Macpherson's two-volume expansion of the Ossian myth *Fingal* (1762) and *Temora* (1763),[6] elaborates conventions that imitate the characteristics of oral discourse, particularly the use of repetition and tense shifts, to create "restored voices," those moments when the text approximates the experience of aural reception for its readers. Through these highly deliberate techniques, Macpherson imbues the act of reading with the illusion of a distinctly aural/auditory dimension.

In summoning the spirit of bardic voice, Macpherson's Ossian poems give rise to a new conceptualization of poetic voice, of how it functions, and of its derivative relationship to oral traditions. Macpherson, by using printed voices to invent an oral tradition, simultaneously fashions a historical context and a series of readerly effects caused by and circumscribed within the text. And by reproducing the relationship between oral performers and their auditors, Macpherson seeks to access the specificity of exotic cultures to create a literate medium that reinvigorates readers' experiences of text. His emphasis on making texts that look back to traditional cultural forms is a crucial point in the emergence of modern British poetry and provides an alternate understanding of the "reciprocal" relationship between orality and literacy.[7]

---

[5] I have borrowed the term "printed voice" from Eric Griffiths, who argues that the "provision of voices for lines of print has to be done with every text" and that this is fundamentally an "exercise of imagination" (1989:7). He points out the "poet's voice is not the voice of the person who is the poet" and the "voice is that which is decided in reading a text" (67). It is this act of "imaginative voicing" that turns readers into an audience (38).

[6] Both *Fingal* and *Temora* are cited from Moore 2004.

[7] Increasingly, orality and literacy have been seen as existing in a reciprocal relationship. For more, see in particular Fox 2000 and Hudson 2001.

Poetry Addiction: Primitive Passion and the Ideology of Authentic Voice

As print became the dominant mode of cultural production in eighteenth-century Britain, scholars of the period identified it as separate from oral traditions. The difference between oral and literate became linked to other binaries, including the perceived dissimilarity between the past and the present, between uncivilized and civilized, and between the primitive and the refined.[8] As authors began to consider the manner in which print could capture and represent these traditions, their interest in orality coincided with (and occurred in response to) the complex perceptions they held of more peripheral locales like the Scottish Highlands, Scandinavia, Persia, and India as oral counterparts to Britain's printed modernity. In the context of an expanding literary marketplace, eighteenth-century writers reflected on the process of cultural mediation whereby poetry could translate oral difference into a printed medium.

The interest in translating cultural differences through literary forms produced what the eighteenth-century antiquarian William Shenstone described as an enormous "appetite" for "foreign poetry," particularly Scottish Gaelic poetry as well as translations of Norse, Welsh, and Germanic folk traditions.[9] This "appetite" was aided by the publication of scholarly tools—such as dictionaries and grammar books—that spurred new concern with and comprehension of non-English verse. The Gaelic ballad traditions that motivated the Ossian poems had existed in Scotland for centuries, but the success of Scottish verse and song collections like Allan Ramsay's *The Ever Green* (1724) and *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724) popularized these traditions among English readers outside of Scotland. While growing up in the Highlands, Macpherson, a native Gaelic speaker, may have come into contact with these ballads. As an adult, he traveled extensively through the Highlands where he said he collected manuscripts and interviewed other Gaelic speakers. After publishing the *Fragments*, a series of fifteen brief prose poems that were supposedly extracts of a larger Scottish epic, Macpherson went back to the Highlands to conduct more research, returning to Edinburgh with "two ponies laden with manuscripts" (Stafford 1988:115-23).[10] These manuscripts, he claimed, allowed him to expand his earlier collection, the *Fragments*, into *Fingal* and *Temora*, an epic poem that depicts the Scottish past as replete with supernatural voices, honorable warfare, and a sentimental warrior-king, Fingal, whose heroic accomplishments were recorded and memorialized by his son, Ossian, who acts as the original bardic performer of these poems.

It is impossible to confirm the veracity of Macpherson's claim that his Ossian poems originate in Scotland's oral traditions, but there is ample evidence for the continued existence of these traditions during the eighteenth century. Gaelic ballads, which provide much of the source material for the characters and plots of Ossian, had endured for over seven hundred years by the time Macpherson arrived in the Highlands for his proto-anthropological trip. This tradition, Donald Meek argues, was an important source of cultural creativity in Scotland and thus "enjoy[ed] a conspicuous place" of "respect" (1991:20). Despite significant revisions between

---

[8] For a discussion of many of these oppositions, see McDowell 2007.

[9] William Shenstone made this remark in a letter; see Ross 2001:7.

[10] For more on this episode, see Groom 1999:78, 113-32.

the medieval period and the eighteenth century, these ballads maintained their "intrinsic vitality" (*ibid.*:43). Macpherson drew on this vitality as he composed the printed voices of his poems.

While traveling in the Highlands collecting manuscripts and speaking with Gaelic ballad performers, Macpherson likely heard songs such as "La Tha Dha'n Fhinn Am Beinn Iongnaidh." This song is part of a subset of the Gaelic ballad tradition that dates from twelfth-century Ireland and recounts the deeds of Fingal.[11] "La Tha Dha'n Fhinn Am Beinn Iongnaidh" tells of "the day when the Fenians [Fingal's people] ... were in the Mountain of Marvels."[12] It repeats images of ferocious ... warriors (the Fenians are described as "fierce men") and beautiful women ... (the song contains references to a "lovely maid" and a "honey-sweet ... girl with beguiling eyes"), chivalric characterizations that reappear ... throughout Ossian. Though performed by one singer, "La Tha ... Dha'n Fhinn Am Beinn Iongnaidh" contains multiple voices, and the ... song oscillates between first-person and third-person address as the ... singer moves between the subjectivities of its characters. In ... the version included here, the performer chants the words and ... regularizes the tempo.[13] As her voice urgently rushes through the song, ... she negotiates a series of related speaking positions, each of which ... possesses its own grammatical procedures and storytelling ... conventions. While there is no evidence that Macpherson heard ... this specific ballad on his trip, it provides insight into the tone and ... formal complexity of the folktales that are an imaginative origin of his Ossian.[14]

"Latha dha'n Fhinn am Beinn Iongnaidh." In *Music from the Western Isles*. Scottish Tradition Series, 2. Edinburgh: Greentrax Records, 1992.

By claiming that the *Fragments* (and the Ossian poems more generally) are "genuine remains," Macpherson invests these folk traditions with the sense that they are an authentic historical record of ancient Scotland. For Macpherson and his supporters, oral traditions function both as an artistic performance and as an accurate account of the past. The ideology of the Ossian

---

[11] There was a significant connection between the folk cultures of Ireland and Scotland during the medieval period. As Alan Bruford has remarked, these Fenian lays are narratives upon related subjects that participated in both literate and oral modes. Composed in the "literary syllabic meters" of the medieval period, "though perhaps not to the standards required of poets of the first rank," they "were probably not written down until they were recorded from oral tradition in the past two centuries" (1987:27). Bardic poetry of this period was designed, Bruford says, "primarily to be learned and chanted publicly by a professional reciter (*reacaire)*, not normally its composer, and might or might not then be written down in a manuscript book of poems (*duanaire*) by a scribe, to preserve it for future generations in case it died out in the more highly valued oral tradition" (27).

[12] This particular version is sung by Mrs. Archie MacDonald. There is little evidence of how eighteenth-century epic traditions sounded. What records remain exist primarily as written transcriptions of ballads that may have been sung primarily in the Scottish Highlands. See MacInnes 1971 and the eCompanion accompanying this article for a complete transcription of this song.

[13] As John MacInnes (1971) notes, while evidence indicates that Ossianic ballads were "sung in a rhythm that observed normal speech stressing," MacDonald tends to "regularize the tempo" (n.p.). He claims that this version might be a twentieth-century break from the conventional ways of performing this song and might help to explain the lack of auditory cues within the song itself.

[14] The best study of these connections remains Thomson 1952:espec. 79-83.

poems establishes that his voice is the "voice of the past" operating "at the point where history and poetry fused" (Haywood 1986:77). Singing preserves the past because it performs what Ossian collects in his memory and passes it on to future generations. Ossian *is* history, Macpherson suggests; historical events and their commemoration by a bard are indistinguishable, and the audience is linked to this history because of its participation in the performance.[15]

Macpherson thematizes the cultural importance of performed memory repeatedly in Ossian. The climax of *Fingal*, for example, explicitly signals the formation of historical context; during the feasting that follows Fingal's final victory, the speaker recounts that "we sat, we feasted, we sung" (Moore 2004:ii, 84). "—A hundred voices at once arose," he states, "a hundred harps were strung; they sung of other times, and [of] the mighty chiefs of former years" (81). Collective singing is figured as an act of remembrance and bardic voice functions as a custodian of traditions, which leads one critic to see the innovation of the poems as their ability to reproduce what readers could imagine is a credible version of oral culture (Haywood 1986:79). Macpherson establishes this credibility by aligning his poems with these songs "of other times." Macpherson's printed voices repeatedly dramatize their status as spoken chronicles (*idem*).

The credibility of this depiction of collective singing and performed memory, however, depends on the use of archaic diction and obsolete syntax to construct a sense of historicity. Macpherson claims that an accurate translation necessitates that he use antiquated English forms. But the inclusion of antiquated English reveals that the authenticity of his poems is a textual effect. For example, in *Fingal* Macpherson recounts a triangular love scene in characteristically outdated English (Moore 2004:ii, 8):

> From the hill I return, O Morna, from the hill of the dark-brown hinds. There I have slain
> with my bended yew. There with my long bounding dogs of the chace.—I have slain one
> stately deer for thee.—High was his branchy head; and fleet his feet of wind.
>
> DUCHOMAR! calm the maid replied, I love thee not, thou gloomy man.—Hard is thy
> heart of rock, and dark thy terrible brow. But Cathbat, thou son of Torman, thou are the
> love of Morna.

Using "thee," "thou," and "thy" pointedly recalls the speech patterns of medieval and Renaissance English. But by the end of the seventeenth century, these pronouns were extremely rare and largely confined to ornate literary discourse (Lass 1999:153).[16] Macpherson composes

---

[15] As Stafford has pointed out, it was the historical claims of the Ossian poems that raised scepticism among many knowledgeable readers. She argues that Macpherson increasingly insisted upon the historical accuracy of his poems—adding footnotes to *Fingal* and *Temora*, for example—which raised alarms among his less approving readers (1988:166).

[16] The history of the second person case is "intricate . . . not well understood" and "possibly incoherent," but the prevailing thought is that in Middle English the second person included both "ye/you" and "thou" (Lass 1999:148). The former suggested formality and the latter familiarity. By the end of the sixteenth century the "th-" forms of speech ("thou" and its possessive "thee" or "thy") were increasingly rare, and by the eighteenth century "*you* was the only normal spoken form; *thou* . . . [was] restricted to high-register discourse" (*ibid.*:153) even though it had once signified more broadly when speakers felt a "heightened emotional tone" or "intimacy" (*ibid.*:149). See also Burnley 1992:200; Stevick 1968:140; and Pyles 1964:201.

this passage, like many others, in metrical prose. Together with self-consciously epic epithets—such as the reference to hunting dogs as "dogs of the chace"—his cadenced writing and uncommon lexicon imparts some sense of Ossian's alien and exotic history, and hints at its performative origin. All of these elements of Macpherson's style are meant to appear as the linguistic manifestation of historical distance.

Macpherson couples his use of archaic diction with equally outmoded syntax that inverts the rules of contemporary English to reinforce the antiquity he associates with his speakers. He uses inverted phrasing to compose one scene from *Temora*, which describes the vastness of Fingal's army as a lengthy dramatic monologue like those found in the *Iliad*: "Do the chiefs of Erin stand . . . silent as the grove of evening? Stand they, like a silent wood, and Fingal on the coast? Fingal, who is terrible in battle, the king of streamy Morven.—Hast thou seen the warrior, said Cairbar with a sigh? Are his heroes many on the coast? Lifts he the spear of battle? Or comes the king in peace?" (Moore 2004:ii, 6). Stilted phrases like "Do the chiefs of Erin stand," "Stand they," and "Lifts he" are obsolete, and they strengthen the sense that *Temora* must be old. Macpherson satisfies the expectation for otherness by creating archaic English equivalents for the speech readers imagine might once have existed in ancient Scotland.

Composing the Ossian poems in this antiquated register is part of Macpherson's strategy to substantiate textually the heroic, passionate nature of Scotland's past. These characteristics were felt by many of his contemporaries still to exist, especially in the Highlands. Because the Highlands' peasants are "far removed from what may be call'd the modern Taste of Life," as the Scottish author Jerome Stone states in 1756, they retain the "custom of singing the praises of their ancient Heroes" (15).[17] These performances, he gushes, are "tender," simple, and "affecting to every mind" but also "daring and incorrect, passionate and bold" (Crawford 2001:39). "For sublimity of language, nervousness of expression, and high spirited metaphors," Stone asserts, these peasants are "hardly to be equalled [*sic*] among the chief productions of the most cultivated nations" (15). Stone reverses the prevailing system of aesthetic value by suggesting that the artistry of an ethnic group on the margin of the British nation surpasses the "cultivated" productions of its literary and cultural center in London.

Hugh Blair, the influential critic, university lecturer, and ally of Macpherson, perceives a similar antithesis between the primitive past and the civilized present and between culturally peripheral locales like the Highlands and the more influential English south. He advises that "in the infancy of all societies, men are much under the dominion of imagination and passion" (Blair 1965:113). In its "ancient state," Blair insists, language is "more favorable to poetry and oratory," while in "modern times," he laments, language is "more correct" and more "accurate" but also "less striking and animated" (124-25).

The Ossian poems become a central example of language and customs in this "ancient state." For Blair, the Highlands are an artifact, a location out of step with modern time and thus a repository of unchanged artistic vitality. Since the "manners" of Scottish peasants are "uncultivated," their language is "full of figures and metaphors, not correct, indeed, but forcible

---

[17] Stone makes these claims in a prose preface to an "Irish Tale" he published in *The Scots Magazine*. Elsewhere, he asserts that he had personally heard a few of these performances and had acquired a "pretty large" collection of them. See further Crawford 2001:37.

and picturesque" (112). Blair even goes so far as to claim that the inhabitants of the Highlands were "addicted" to poetry (Macpherson 1765:i, 24). For him, like Stone, the Highlands are one of the few remaining places where a sentimental relationship remains to the landscape and to history; this relationship is evident, Blair claims, in "sublime" and "metaphorical" oral performances (51). Highlanders' natural propensity for bold poeticizing, he believes, involves a style of expression that is more potent than the tepid productions of civilized culture. By assuring readers that Ossianic voices originate in a context like the one that Blair describes, Macpherson accesses the notion that his poems reflect an imaginative past that has never been corrupted by rational thought.

Yet Macpherson's portrayal of Scottish oral traditions is also indebted to mid-eighteenth-century aesthetic categories of the Enlightenment, as recent scholars have pointed out. His poetry, Adam Potkay notes, is a "palimpsest of savage and enlightened knowledge and manners," and Fingal repeatedly exhibits "civilized compassion" and "delicate affectations fostered by domesticity" (Potkay 1992:121, 125, 127). The refined manners of Ossian and his contemporaries are a source of sharp contention for skeptics like Johnson, who insist that ancient Scotland is coarse and brutish, not compassionate and sophisticated (Johnson and Boswell 1984:118). Through the impersonation of bardic voice, however, Macpherson reconciles his nostalgia for a fierce Scottish past with his desire for domestic virtues and for the Enlightenment's "most cherished ideals of polity and manners" (Potkay 1992:127). The affecting voices of the Ossian poems recreate an "intimate social intercourse" (McGann 1996:35) based both on idealized depictions of oral performance and on values of eighteenth-century philosophy like sympathy and humanism. The addiction to poetry that Blair and Stone recount becomes a model for a "lost paradise of sensibility" (*ibid.*:34) located not in England but in early Scotland and in the vibrant folk traditions of the Highlands. Macpherson reinstates this "paradise" of social intimacy by simulating performances like that of "La Tha Dha'n Fhinn Am Beinn Iongnaidh" in his printed texts. For Macpherson, therefore, oral voices are more than relics of past traditions; they emanate into the present, via textuality, and revive a civic intercourse modeled on the bond thought to exist between oral performers and their listening audience. The aura of authenticity that Macpherson disseminates with his texts allows and requires that he reinvent the primitivism and refinement that are the contradictory traits of Scottish bardic culture as it is perceived during the mid-eighteenth century.

Ambiguous Speech: Print and the Re-Conceptualization of Voice

Understanding how Macpherson re-creates the idealized social intercourse of a cultured Scottish past requires a reexamination of the role of printed techniques and literary figuration in his depiction of oral voices. Although Macpherson portrays the intimacy and sentimentality of his Ossianic texts as a reflection of ancient customs, in order to do this he detaches voicing from its association with human speech. Many scholars have described the landscape of Ossian as "desolate" or "inanimate" (McGann 1996:35; Stafford 1988:107). Instead, it is alive with voices that often penetrate the land or erupt out of it. The characters of his poems, far from being isolated, are perpetually conversing with this landscape and with the human spirits that populate

it. Macpherson creates a vocal world of speakers, all of whom are embedded within an animistic culture of performance in which everyone and everything seems to be involved in acts of enunciation.

The proliferation of voices makes it apparent that Macpherson exceeds any simple identification between the literary voice operating in his texts and his claim that he translates oral voices. It is often overlooked, for example, that in Ossian the term "voice" encompasses more than collective history or oral performance; that is, voice, as a term, designates more than oral tradition in the process of creation or verbal narration modulated by a singing bard. Not just a function of social memory, voice also appears as a defining characteristic of the geography and a property of inanimate objects. In Macpherson's fourth fragment, for instance, one speaker asks "whose voice is that, loud as the wind, but pleasant as the harp" (Macpherson 1966:19). Later, one speaker claims that another's voice is "like the streams of the hill" (38). These two references demonstrate the close relationship between human voices and natural processes, where the former becomes coherent only by referring to the latter. The speaker of Fragment III, moreover, sets the scene by stating that "no voice is heard except the blustering winds" (16). In another fragment, the speaker mourns a friend who has drowned by wondering "if we might have heard, with thee, the voice of the deep" (16) and states that "there, was the clashing of swords; there, was the voice of steel" (29). Significantly, in these last three instances inanimate objects and natural processes are personified—they're given voice—in a way that relates them to the articulate human speakers found throughout the poems.

Voice is even associated with ghosts. This link dramatizes the difficulty and the potential involved in creating printed texts that try to establish more intimate connections to readers. By making voice independent of human bodies and detaching it from its common alliance with verbal articulation, Macpherson enlarges the range of objects that can possess voice and thus redefines what it is. In the process, he imagines new possibilities for what it can do. These possibilities are revealed most fully by the *confusion* about who speaks that pervades the Ossian poems, especially the *Fragments*. Speakers often ask "what voice is that?" or "whose voice is that?" The "Preface" to the *Fragments* hints that a single bardic speaker organizes the various voices of the poems. In *Fingal* and *Temora* Macpherson solidifies this idea by more obviously figuring Ossian as the primary speaker. But these questions demonstrate that voice exists in a perpetual state of uncertainty.

The purposeful absence of typographical marks and the rapid shifts in temporality and point of view reinforce the uncertainty about who speaks when. This confusion, which is particularly salient in Fragment I, hints at the importance of literary technique for Macpherson's textualized depiction of oral performance. Although presented visually as a dialogue between two lovers, Shilric and Vinvela, they seem not to be in each other's presence when they first speak. Vinvela describes Shilric in the third person, as if he is not there and she cannot directly address him. She begins by stating "My love is a son of the hill. He pursues the flying deer" (Macpherson 1966:9). Even though Shilric repeats many of Vinvela's images, the separation between the two lovers is confirmed when he replies "What voice is that I hear? that voice like the summer-wind" (10). That voice is Vinvela's from the stanza-paragraph before,

which, like the summer wind, traverses the physical distance that separates her from Shilric and the graphic space that distinguishes each voice in this dialogue.

A change occurs toward the middle of the fragment when Shilric, away at war and concerned about its dangers, asks Vinvela to remember him if he dies. She responds to his request as if she has heard his statement, suggesting that some kind of direct discourse has commenced between them. Voice is particularly acrobatic here. The distance between the speakers that is formalized in their initial third-person address is overcome through a shift in point of view. Macpherson reunites the two speakers across the physical distance that is implied by the white space that blocks off their individual enunciations. A narrative for this first fragment is created from these graphical cues and variations in mode of address. At their widest separation, Shilric's and Vinvela's voices likewise could be said to be at their most grammatically distant—that is, in the third person—while a sense of immediacy is made evident at the end of the dialogue by the transition from third-person to second-person address, as when, in response to Shilric's request to remember him, Vinvela says "Yes!—I will remember *thee*" (11; emphasis mine).

Much of the separation described in Macpherson's *Fragments* results not from physical separation, as in Fragment I, but from death. The distinction between the living and the dead, however, is significantly eroded in the *Fragments,* since the landscape and the social order are populated by the spirits of those who have died. These ghosts are an important part of Macpherson's conceptualization of literary voice because they occupy a liminal point between literacy and orality. Their voices are unmoored from the constraints of human corporeality, allowing them to circulate more widely than living speakers, much as Macpherson introduces printed voices to extend the range of the oral voices in Ossian.

The confusion about who is speaking and how one is meant to read these ghostly voices is an explicit effect of the *Fragments'* form, and readers' delight or consternation arises in part from puzzling over these moments. The second fragment, which continues the narrative of Shilric and Vinvela, provides an excellent example of this dynamic. The majority of the fragment

---

FRAGMENT

I.

SHILRIC, VINVELA.

VINVELA.

MY love is a son of the hill. He pursues the flying deer. His grey dogs are panting around him; his bow-string sounds in the wind. Whether by the fount of the rock, or by the stream of the mountain thou liest; when the rushes are nodding with the wind, and the mist is flying over thee, let me approach my love unperceived, and see him from the rock. Lovely I saw thee first by the aged oak; thou wert returning tall from the chace; the fairest among thy friends.

B   SHILRIC.

[10]

SHILRIC.

WHAT voice is that I hear? that voice like the summer-wind.——I sit not by the nodding rushes; I hear not the fount of the rock. Afar, Vinvela, afar I go to the wars of Fingal. My dogs attend me no more. No more I tread the hill. No more from on high I see thee, fair-moving by the stream of the plain; bright as the bow of heaven; as the moon on the western wave.

VINVELA.

THEN thou art gone, O Shilric! and I am alone on the hill. The deer are seen on the brow; void of fear they graze along. No more they dread the wind; no more the rustling tree. The hunter is far removed; he

James Macpherson, Fragment I

appears in Shilric's voice. It recounts a sequence of events that illustrates the disordered temporality of the *Fragments*: Shilric returns from abroad only to learn that Vinvela committed suicide after mistakenly believing that he was killed. While he meditates on this tragedy, the spirit of Vinvela appears to him. Her voice intrudes into his first-person reminiscence (Macpherson 1966:14-15):

> BUT is it she that there appears, like a beam of light on the heath? bright as the moon in autumn, as the sun in the summer storm?—She speaks: but how weak her voice! like the breeze in the reeds of the pool. Hark!

> RETURNEST thou safe from the war? Where are thy friends, my love? I heard of thy death on the hill; I heard and mourned thee, Shilric!

> YES, my fair, I return; but I alone of my race. Thou shalt see them no more: their graves I raised on the plain. But why art thou on the desert hill? why on the heath, alone?

> ALONE I am, O Shilric! alone in the winter-house. With grief for thee I expired. Shilric, I am pale in the tomb.

> SHE fleets, she sails away; as grey mist before the wind!—and wilt thou not stay, my love?

Vinvela's voice irrupts into Shilric's narrative, just as her spirit encroaches upon his solitude. When she disappears, Shilric returns to his monologue, referring to Vinvela again in the third person, demonstrating that her spirit has left and their direct conversation has ceased. His question "wilt thou not stay, my love?" seems addressed to her absence.

Unlike the first fragment where dialogue is demarcated more clearly, confusion arises from the fact that the text supplies nearly no signs to specify when these shifts happen or to identify the transition between different voices—there are no character titles in this fragment to signify who is speaking, and there is no standard punctuation, such as quotation marks, to differentiate one individual's speech from another's or from the narration. How are readers to know which voices are speaking and which are narrating? How are readers supposed to distinguish verbal conversation from the characters' internal thoughts? Readers must intuit these details from the content, the syntax, and the use of names. The lack of diacritical marks is a deliberate strategy to amplify the sense of ephemerality surrounding Vinvela's voice; the absence of printed conventions reinforces Vinvela's uncertain corporeality. By reserving indicators of reported speech, the text lets readers decide if her voice is "real" or not. Her voice may simply be a hallucination produced by Shilric's grief. Or it could be Macpherson's way of indicating the disconnection between her voice and her body, when the former does not depend upon the existence of the latter. In both of these scenarios, the text's printed form is the vehicle that

addresses these possible interpretations. Identifying and comprehending these spectral voices requires a high degree of literacy and the ability to attend closely to the form of the text.

In the *Fragments*, therefore, humans could be thought of as constituted primarily by their voices, by the conditions under which they enunciate. These conditions—whether a speaker is alive or dead or whether the voice comes from a living person or an inanimate object—cannot be taken for granted because they are under persistent scrutiny in the *Fragments*. The ghosts of the *Fragments*, who drift into and out of the narrative like Vinvela, reveal most clearly the motive behind making humans equivalent to their voices. These apparitions are literary voice in its most rarefied, even purified form in that they transcend the restrictions of human corporeality. For Macpherson, these ghosts are attractive because they are not limited by the body or by the seeming impermanence of oral dissemination: they range across physical states and temporal boundaries. The mobility of these ghostly voices and their survival after death exemplifies the advantages of print. In a sense, Macpherson does not just re-create oral culture but invents a printed voice that first reenacts and then surpasses bardic voice—and indicates his text's tenuous connection with actual bards—by deemphasizing the significance of living bodies.

Speak Memory: Writing, Re-Performance, and Restored Voices

Detaching speaking voices from human bodies is a metaphor for the operation of printed voice. Macpherson's printed voices are inspired by bardic performance and the immediacy of a listening audience, but they do not depend on actual singers or auditors. Instead, by simulating oral traditions Macpherson instills into his text the passion and authenticity associated with performance while maintaining print's ability to preserve and widely disseminate voices. And by filling his history of Ossian with the ghosts of heroes or the songs of bards, Macpherson carefully excludes the role of writing from the origin of his poems and maintains the consistency of Ossian's oral traditional setting.[18]

But these ghosts reveal the numerous ways that Ossian's voice requires writing, if not within the imaginative logic of the poems, then at least within their printed manifestation. This becomes especially clear in Fragment VI, in which the present tense of Ossian's song brushes up against its thematization of memory. This fragment begins with an appeal by an interlocutor, who is referred to as the "son of Alpin," for Ossian to tell a tale (Macpherson 1966:26):

> SON of noble Fingal, Oscian, Prince of Men! what tears run down the cheeks of
> age? What shades thy Mighty soul?
>
> MEMORY, son of Alpin, memory wounds the aged. Of former times are my
> thoughts; my thoughts are of the noble Fingal. The race of the king return into my mind,
> and wound me with remembrance.

---

[18] Ghosts come to represent this situation because Ossian's world is meant to be a "preliterate, and therefore prehistorical, attempt to think about history" (Underwood 2002:238).

> ONE day, returned from the sport of the mountains from pursuing the sons of
> the hill, we covered this heath with our youth . . . .

As with many of the Ossian poems, here the transition between voices and tenses is abrupt. But unlike the dialogues between Shilric and Vinvela, the Son of Alpin's appeal to Ossian fosters a sense of a present performance within which a tale from Ossian's memory is embedded. The explicit invocation of a listening audience is a consistent feature of the Gaelic ballad tradition (Meek 1991:28), and Macpherson signals this convention in the way he composes and relates the printed voices of this fragment. When Ossian begins to remember (which is also when he begins to perform), the fragment shifts into the past tense.

While Ossian's stories concern his memories, and thus appear in the past tense, the voices of his story's characters often appear in the present tense. These tense shifts presumably denote the way that he recalls and performs voices from the past, acting them out for his listeners. Fragment VII, which recounts the death of Ossian's son Oscur, begins like Fragment VI with an invocation of memory, and changes quickly into the past tense signifying the beginning of Ossian's reminiscence. But the present tense returns again when the fragment introduces the voices of other characters, such as Oscur, his friend Dermid, and the daughter of their enemy Dargo, whom they both love. When Dermid learns that Dargo's daughter is infatuated with Oscur and not him, he asks Oscur to kill him and end his misery (Macpherson 1966:33).

> SON of Oscian, said Dermid, I love; O Oscur, I love this maid. But her soul
> cleaveth unto thee; and nothing can heal Dermid. Here, pierce this bosom, Oscur; relieve
> me, my friend, with thy sword.

> MY sword son of Morny, shall never be stained with the blood of Dermid.

> WHO then is worthy to slay me, O Oscur, son of Oscian? Let not my life pass
> away unknown. Let none but Oscur slay me. Send me with honour to the grave, and let
> my death be renowned.

This passage reinforces what many scholars have noted is the affinity between the Ossian poems and actual techniques of oral performance, such as the use of epithets, the repetition of phrases, and what Joseph Roach has described as "re-performance," a process whereby culture is perpetuated through pairing "a collective memory with the enactments that embody it through performance" (1996:13).[19] According to Roach, re-performance operates through "surrogation,"

---

[19] Roach's argument about performance as re-performance is based in part on Richard Schechner's description of performance as "'twice behaved behavior'" or "'restored behavior'" (Roach 1996:3). For a fuller discussion of the features of oral traditions in Macpherson, see Fitzgerald 1966:22-33; Stafford 1988:103-11; Groom 1999:77. The scholarship on oral traditional techniques is vast. For a general introduction to the idea of oral tradition, see Lord 1968; Finnegan 1970; Ong 1982; Jousse 1990; Foley 1995, among others.

which is the idea that culture has no beginning or end but simply reproduces itself by filling vacancies as they appear.[20]

Surrogation's continuous temporality of endless substitution is, for Roach, a constitutive characteristic of oral traditions. But in the seventh fragment, written techniques, and the temporality that they denote, are a critical part of invoking Ossian's re-performance of bardic voice. Ossian, in the present of the poem, turns to the past tense to tell the historical events surrounding his son's death. The interjection of "said Dermid" conveys the sense that Ossian is "restoring" the characters' voices through his song. "Said Dermid" delineates Ossian's position in regard to other speakers; it clarifies whose voice is speaking when Ossian is not acting as a narrator. It qualifies Dermid's words as reported speech for an audience who presumably has not heard what Dermid said or witnessed his actions. The shift into the present tense reanimates these voices for the listeners and accentuates the sense of immediate dramatic action.

These indicators of reported speech gradually diminish, however, as the fragment becomes interested in displaying the characters' voices on their own. The jarring shifts between past and present become more pronounced as the fragment switches quickly between the voices of the characters and the voice of their performer and narrator, Ossian, who frames their speech: "And fallest thou, son of Morny; fallest thou by Oscur's hand! Dermid invincible in war, thus do I see thee fall!—He went, and returned to the maid whom he loved; returned but she perceived his grief" (Macpherson 1966:34). Only a single dash divides the present-tense description of Oscur murdering Dermid from the reminiscent narration of his father, Ossian. In this complicated framing of voice, Ossian sings to an audience and in the process re-performs Oscur calling out to Dermid. The past and present mingle ambiguously at such moments, pronouns become elusive and perplexing, and writing's ability to manifest or withhold tense changes, speakers' identities, typographical marks, and framing gestures is an essential part of representing how voice functions in these poems and how readers experience it.

Changes in temporality and the presence (or absence) of prompts such as "said Dermid" encourage readers to read Macpherson's poems as auditors would supposedly listen to Ossian's storytelling. This framing structure insists that readers understand that they are removed from the oral telling described in the poems while nonetheless being addressed as a participating public. It allows Macpherson both to reassert and to revoke the distance—temporal and spatial—involved in the act of writing these poems and in the act of reading them. Macpherson refines this structure in later volumes of the Ossian poems. In *Temora*, for example, Ossian recounts Fingal's revenge for his son's death. Quickly shifting between the past and present tense disorients readers by forcing them to consider two different temporal moments—the past of Fingal's actions and the present of Ossian's tale. Macpherson writes that "Fingal heard the son; and took his father's spear. His steps are before us on the heath. He spoke the words of woe. I hear the noise of war. Young Oscar is alone. Rise, sons of Morven; join the hero's sword" (Moore 2004:ii, 14). By shifting between tenses, Ossian seems to experience these events (again) and recollect them for his listeners. The simultaneity of telling and retelling, of original event and its

---

[20] Roach writes that "the process of surrogation does not begin or end but continues as actual or perceived vacancies occur in the network of relations that constitutes the social fabric" (1996:2). This process, he notes, is inexact, and happens through trial and error.

remembrance by a bard, make the plot described in this passage seem present and distant all at once. Fingal's actions are narrated in the past tense—he "heard the son" and "took his father's spear"—but the speaker also slips into the present tense, raising the figure of Fingal as if from the dead for his audience—"His steps are before us on the heath"—and enjoining his listeners to see him, hear him, and "rise up" to help him. It is unclear whether "us" refers to the implied auditors of Ossian's performance or Fingal's loyal warriors, among them Ossian, who are intent on aiding their king. Nonetheless, the imperative mode that Macpherson uses—"rise . . . join"— addresses readers as if they are present at the site of the battle and Ossian is imploring them to action. The grammar of the passage makes readers into present(-tense) witnesses of what Ossian tells. By swaying back and forth between tenses, these sentences reposition readers as listeners— as those "sons of Morven" who should respond to Ossian's act of oral telling. Macpherson's use of literary devices like direct address, imperative mode, and the collapsing of temporalities converts distant readers into participants who share in Ossian's performed history.

The multiple forms of direct address that Macpherson employs throughout his Ossian poems create a participatory mode of reading that is reinforced by the visual illustrations and engravings that accompany many of his publications. These illustrations depict Ossian performing to an audience. The title page of his 1762 *Fingal*, for example, shows Ossian in a rugged mountainous setting surrounded by attentive listeners. Ossian is dressed in loose, almost Roman robes; he is bearded and blind, features that recall Homer and that had become associated with British bards by the mid-eighteenth century. His arms are in motion, his mouth is opened wide, presumably singing or chanting exactly those poems that are collected in the volume that follows this image. The figures in the engraving peer over Ossian's shoulder or leisurely rest on a rock outcropping. The key aspect of this image is the placement of the audience members behind Ossian; they look as though they are oriented toward readers rather than the performer in the engraving. The image thus makes the audience visible not to Ossian but to readers, a visual cue that suggests the engraving functions as a model for what it means to be an auditor hearing Ossian perform.

An image from 1787 is equally emphatic in its presentation of Ossian's performance (Christensen 1972:17). Here, Ossian is alone, facing out toward the volume's readers. The scene is more foreboding than that of the 1762 title page. Ossian is shown as an oracular bard. The angled tree in the background amplifies the lines
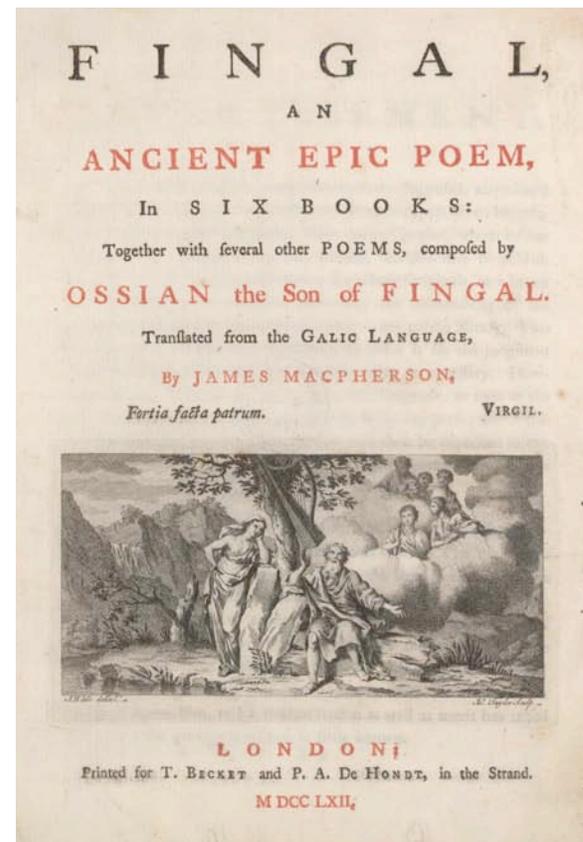
1762, *Fingal* Frontispiece

formed by the ribs of his harp and the diagonal of his spear. The rotting tree that he rests upon and his blowing cape and beard imply gothic surroundings. While this setting differs noticeably from the 1762 engraving, once again Ossian is shown declaiming with one hand and strumming his harp with the other. He seems to direct his singing out from the page toward readers. His wide-open mouth insinuates that he is mid-song, and that those who open the volume are presented with his sound.

These images encourage readers to consider themselves as listeners rather than just as users of a silent printed book. They are visual representations of the intimacy that Macpherson seeks to inculcate between text and readers. These images give a sense of what Macpherson was also trying to accomplish with his poems; that is, make readers feel like they are participating in the ancient Scottish past and listening in on Ossian's heroic tales. Even if readers cannot hear these poems being performed, as nearly none of them would, they are asked to imagine themselves as the listeners represented in these engravings. The popularity of these poems, therefore, stems not just from the heroic manners and pleasing sentimentality described in them, from the sense that they are sophisticated remnants of an indigenous Scottish culture, or from the feeling of national pride sparked by asserting a cultural tradition worthy of Homer. Ossian enters into Scottish mythology—adorning lavish estates like Penicuik House near Edinburgh (which had an entire room painted so that it portrayed Ossian singing)[21] and inspiring a budding tourist industry that brought travelers to remote

1787, Ossian Singing, Clemens Engraving

21   For   more   information   on   Penicuik   House,   visit   http://www.penicuikhouse.co.uk/history-penicuikhouse.aspx.

Fingal's Cave, Library of Congress

locations like Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa—because Macpherson permits readers to indulge in the fantasy that they are inheritors of heroic Scottish values. His texts re-create the intimate intercourse of an imaginary ancient past that is reclaimed and made present again through reading. Print culture, as scholars have observed, provokes a shift in understanding about the difference between the past and the present by its ability to preserve and codify accounts of historical events;[22] Macpherson's printed forms reject this shift by deliberately, even inevitably interpenetrating past and present. The Ossian poems thus establish continuities between the past and the present that elide the rupture that occurred in Scottish culture subsequent to its historic defeat at Culloden in 1746. Macpherson draws readers to his poems by offering them the possibility of reading differently—that is, of reading as ancient listeners might have heard the sounds of Ossian.

---

[22] For more on the way that the shift from oral and manuscript to print-based culture changed notions of past and present, see Eisenstein 1979.

Reading and Hearing Differently

In the Ossian poems, poetic voice is the effect created by Macpherson's highly deliberate literary practices. Evoked through print, his voice is authenticated by its alignment with the oral. At the same time, the bardic voices of the Ossian poems are unveiled as a literary technique akin to personifying the north wind or the ocean's depths. Voice is embedded within the literary, waiting to be invented so as to create a connection to readers that is like the communal intimacy of embodied oral communication. Macpherson's figuration of his poems as an extended instance of oral voicing transforms readers' relationship to his text by consistently asking them to imagine themselves as auditors. This figuration, and the innovative printed techniques that articulate it, are an illusion intended to offset print's potential for solitariness and alienation.

Bardic voice functions, therefore, as an alternative to prevailing models of eighteenth-century authorial voice. By striving to recreate in print the primitivism of ancient oral voices, Macpherson stages poetic innovations that reconnect authors and readers. He extends aural transmission—which is tied to human performers, whether real or imagined—by cultivating an oral sensibility in a textual environment. In lieu of the corporeality of actual human speakers functioning in a living oral tradition, Macpherson offers the "body" of the text—a set of conventions that materially structure the representation of voice on the page so as to enact aural reception and turn readers into auditors. Therefore, the "invention of voice" referred to in the title of this article is not intended to suggest that authors before the eighteenth century do not have poetic voices or that voice is a concept that exists only after this historical moment. Rather, voice becomes clarified as authors like Macpherson explore the ways that print constructs the semblance of traditional speech. Thus the cultural notions and literary devices typically seen as nostalgic for an oral world before print are in fact the ways that eighteenth-century authors suggest a new mode by which they can connect with readers through print.

The popular reaction to the Ossian poems in many ways confirms the success of Macpherson's experiment. The Scottish intellectual Blair fondly calls Ossian "the poetry of the heart" and describes him as having "an exquisite sensibility of heart" (Macpherson 1765:ii, 340, 349, 389). The emphasis on the "heart" as the location of feeling and sentiment appears in readers' responses as well. The playwright Frances Sheridan, wife of the elocutionist Thomas Sheridan, claims that a person's reaction to Ossian fixes their "standard of feeling"; Ossian, she remarks, is "like a thermometer by which [one] could judge the warmth of everybody's heart."[23] Werther, Goethe's hero of sensibility, reads Ossian and promptly pronounces that Ossian has "ousted" Homer from his heart (Lamport 1998:98). As these reactions demonstrate, Ossian elicits sentimentalized effects from readers who imagine themselves to be absorbing bardic voices. Hence, for many, Ossian is a text that is meant to be heard and then internalized within the body. Their revivified hearts express the immediate connection they feel between their internal sensibility and the history recounted by the texts. Their bodily reactions to the authenticity of oral voices in turn legitimize the feelings provoked by those voices. Macpherson's poems propose the satisfying delusion that by reading one can hear Ossian speaking and can feel the

---

[23] This reaction was recorded by James Boswell in his journal during his early years in London (1992:182). See also Stafford 1988:171-73. She claims that reactions like these "belong to the 'age of sensibility'" and demonstrate that Ossian expertly elicited sentimentality from its readers (172).

emotions that listeners in the exotic world of ancient Scotland would have felt when they heard his voice burst into song. So while the debate continues about the claim that the Ossian poems are "genuine remains of ancient Scottish poetry," Macpherson seems to have inculcated a sense of intimacy and passionate expression that eighteenth-century authors and readers perceived to be characteristic of traditional art forms and the experience of oral performance.

Wheaton College, Massachusetts

References

Blair 1965   Hugh Blair. *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Ed. by Harold F. Harding. Foreword by David Potter**.** Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Boswell 1992   James Boswell. *Boswell's London Journal: 1762-63*. Ed. by Frederick A. Pottle. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Bruford 1987   Alan Bruford. "Oral and Literary Fenian Tales." In *Fiannaiocht: Essays on the Fenian Tradition of Ireland and Scotland*. Ed. by Bo Almquist, Séamas Ó Catháin, and Pádraig Ó Héalaí. Dublin: The Folklore of Ireland Society.

Burnley 1992   David Burnley. *The History of the English Language: A Source Book*. London: Longman.

Christensen 1972   Charlotte Christensen. "Ossian-illustrationer i Danmark." *Fund og forskning i det Kongelige Biblioteks samlinger*, 19:7-32.

Crawford 2001   Robert Crawford. *The Modern Poet: Poetry, Academia, and Knowledge Since the 1750s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eisenstein 1979   Elizabeth Eisenstein. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Finnegan 1970   Ruth Finnegan. *Oral Literature in Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Fitzgerald 1966   Robert P. Fitzgerald. "The Style of Ossian." *Studies in Romanticism,* 6:22-33.

Foley 1995   John Miles Foley. *The Singer of Tales in Performance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Fox 2000   Adam Fox. *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gray 1935   Thomas Gray. *The Correspondence of Thomas Gray*. Ed. by Paget Toynbee and
                                       Leonard Whibley. 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Griffiths 1989   Eric Griffiths. *The Printed Voice of Victorian Poetry*. Oxford: Oxford University
                                       Press.

Groom 1999   Nick Groom. *The Making of Percy's Reliques*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Haywood 1986   Ian Haywood. *The Making of History: A Study of the Literary Forgeries of
                                       James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton in Relation to Eighteenth-Century
                                       Ideas of History and Fiction*. Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University
                                       Press.

Hess 2005   Scott Hess. *Authoring the Self: Self-Representation, Authorship, and the Print
                                       Market in British Poetry from Pope through Wordsworth*. New York and
                                       London: Routledge.

Hudson 2001   Nicolas Hudson. "Constructing Oral Tradition: The Origins of the Concept in
                                       Enlightenment Intellectual Culture." In *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in
                                       Britain, 1500-1850*. Ed. by Adam Fox and Daniel Wolff. Manchester and New
                                       York: Manchester University Press. pp. 240-55.

Johnson 2000   Samuel Johnson. *The Major Works*. Ed. by Donald Greene. Oxford: Oxford
                                       University Press.

Johnson and Boswell 1984   _____ and James Boswell. *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* and
                                       The Journal of the Tour of the Hebrides. London: Penguin.

Jousse 1990   Marcel Jousse. *The Oral Style*. Trans. by Edgard Sienaert and Richard Whitaker.
                                       New York: Garland.

Lamport 1998   F. J. Lamport. "Goethe, Ossian, and *Werther*." In *From Gaelic to Romantic:
                                       Ossianic Translations*. Ed. by Fiona Stafford and Howard Gaskill. Amsterdam
                                       and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi. pp. 97-106.

Lass 1999   Robert Lass, ed. *The Cambridge History of the English Language, Vol. III:
                                       1476-1776*. 6 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lonsdale 1977   Roger Lonsdale. *Thomas Gray and William Collins: Poetical Works*. Oxford:
                                       Oxford University Press.

Lord 1968   Albert B. Lord. *The Singer of Tales*. New York: Atheneum.

MacDonald 1992   Mrs. Archie MacDonald. "Latha dha'n Fhinn am Beinn Iongnaidh." In *Music from the Western Isles*. Scottish Tradition Series, 2. Edinburgh: Greentrax Records.

MacInnes 1971   John MacInnes. Album Liner Notes, "Latha dha'n Fhinn am Beinn Iongnaidh." In *Music from the Western Isles*. Scottish Tradition Series, 2. Edinburgh: Greentrax Records.

Macpherson 1762   James Macpherson. *Fingal, An Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books: Together with several Other Poems Composed by Ossian, the Son of Fingal*. London: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. DeHondt.

Macpherson 1765   _____. *The Works of Ossian, the Son of Fingal. Translated from the Galic Language by James Macpherson*. 2 vols. London: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. DeHondt.

Macpherson 1966   _____. *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. Ed. by John J. Dunn. Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Augustan Reprint Society.

McDowell 2007   Paula McDowell. "Towards a Genealogy of 'Print Culture' and Oral Tradition." Unpubl. paper presented at the Mediating Enlightenment conference, New York University.

McGann 1996   Jerome McGann. *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Meek 1991   Donald Meek. "The Gaelic Ballads of Scotland: Creativity and Adaptation." In *Ossian Revisited*. Ed. by Howard Gaskill. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. pp. 19-48.

Moore 2004   Dafydd Moore, ed. *Ossian and Ossianism*. 4 vols. London: Routledge.

Mulholland 2008   James Mulholland. "Gray's Ambition: Printed Voices and Performing Bards in the Later Poetry." *English Literary History,* 75:111-36.

Ong 1982   Walter Ong. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. New York: Routledge.

Penicuik House   "The History of Penicuik House." Accessed January 18, 2010. http://www.penicuikhouse.co.uk/history-penicuikhouse.aspx.

Potkay 1992   Adam Potkay. "Virtue and Manners in Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*." *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 107:120-30.

Pyles 1964   Thomas Pyles. *The Origins and Development of the English Language,* 2nd ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Ramsay 1724   Allan Ramsay. *The Tea-Table Miscellany*. Edinburgh.

Ramsay 1724   _____. *The Ever Green, Being a Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious before 1600.* Edinburgh.

Roach 1996   Joseph Roach. *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ross 2001   Margaret Clunies Ross. *The Old Norse Poetic Translations of Thomas Percy: A New Edition and Commentary.* Turnhout: Brepols.

Stafford 1988   Fiona Stafford. *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Stevick 1968   Robert D. Stevick. *English and Its History: The Evolution of a Language*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Stewart 1991   Susan Stewart. *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stone 1756   Jerome Stone. "Albin and the Daughter of Mey: An old tale, translated from the Irish." *The Scots Magazine,* 18. Edinburgh.

Thomson 1952   Derick S. Thomson. *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's "Ossian."* Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd.

Underwood 2002   Ted Underwood. "Romantic Historicism and the Afterlife." *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, 117:237-51.

Weinbrot 1993   Howard Weinbrot. *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zionkowski 2001   Linda Zionkowksi. *Men's Work: Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Poetry, 1660-1784*. New York: Palgrave.