

# UC Santa Cruz

## UC Santa Cruz Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

The Death of Malvina: Suicide, Gender and Nationalism in the French Reception of the Ossian Poems

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8987k788>

### Author

Goralka, Robin

### Publication Date

2019

### Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

SANTA CRUZ

**THE DEATH OF MALVINA: SUICIDE, GENDER AND NATIONALISM IN  
THE FRENCH RECEPTION OF THE OSSIAN POEMS**

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

LITERATURE

by

**Robin Goralka**

December 2019

The Thesis of Robin Goralka  
is approved:

---

Professor Jody Greene, Chair

---

Professor Karen Bassi

---

Professor Ian Duncan

---

Quentin Williams  
Acting Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Copyright © by  
Robin Goralka  
2019

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Text	1
Bibliography	54

## ABSTRACT

### **The Death of Malvina: Suicide, Gender, and Nationalism in the French Reception of the Ossian Poems**

**Robin Goralka**

This paper examines three different French translations of James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*, those of Pierre Le Tourneur (1777), Antoine Vincent Arnault (1796), and Pierre Baour-Lormian (1801). Building on the relationship between Romanticism and nationalism, and *Ossian's* well-established connection to both, I use three different versions of "The Death of Oscar" as case studies to examine how *Ossian's* reception in France before, during, and after the French Revolution reflects shifting social as well as aesthetic values. The three versions show not only an affinity between French nationalism and the stories of *Ossian*, but also a growing anxiety in France about women's political involvement. Arnault's and Bour-Lormian's versions restrict the character Malvina's participation in heroic action in a way that reflects the political marginalization of women in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, specifically through reforms in the French army, as well as cultural discomfort around the issue of women's suicide and suicide more broadly.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my committee for their invaluable advice over the long process of developing a simple paper into a fully-fledged thesis. My advisor, Professor Jody Greene, was always great at helping me to develop and focus my own ideas; I always came out of our conversations with a better understanding of what I wanted to do – and how to go about it. Professor Ian Duncan was the first to encourage me to investigate the French reception of the Ossian poems and I am so grateful for the advice and field knowledge he provided along the way. I have had the good fortune to work with Professor Karen Bassi from the beginning of my time at UC Santa Cruz, and I am so thankful for the ways she has pushed me to be a more focused and precise scholar throughout my time there.

I would also like to thank Professor Loisa Nygaard, who taught me an incredible amount about pedagogy as well as 18<sup>th</sup>-century landscape theory.

I am eternally grateful to my parents and stepparents, without whose support, this long journey would likely not have been possible. Thank you for believing in me, even when I did not believe in myself. My dear friends, too numerous to name, who helped me to balance the emotional toil of study – and serious subject matter – with the laughter and joy of life, thank you so much – even (especially) those of you who are no longer here.

## **The Death of Malvina: Suicide, Gender, and Nationalism in the French**

### **Reception of the Ossian Poems**

The late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century in France was a time of convulsive political upheaval - from the end of the *ancien regime* through the Terror and into the Directory and the beginning of Napoleon's rise to power, rapid social and political change took hold of France. At the same time, French literary and historical tastes were marked by an enthusiasm for Celtic myth and literature – a precursor to France's nationalist folk art movements that helped spark the search for more autochthonic Gaulic myths – in addition to the long-standing influence of Greek and Roman art. The success in France of James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*, which went through numerous adaptations and translations in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, is one demonstration of this appreciation. These translations circle around the same increasingly fashionable source material and attune it to the concerns of their time. The Ossian poems, told from the perspective of a blind poet who has outlived the great days of his people, not only lend themselves particularly well to adaptation; they also are particularly concerned with the foundation of nationhood in ways that led to their frequent co-optation by other countries' developing nationalisms.

One commonly noted characteristic of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century French nationalism was its explicit refusal to extend expanded rights to women. Both the Revolutionary government and Napoleon explicitly denounced attempts politically engaged women made to lay claim to new rights under the new regimes. On the other

hand, the expectations placed on *citoyennes* not only show the changing role of women in these new governments, but also bring to light the anxieties of these new French nationalisms. By studying the translations and adaptations of James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* into French before, during, and after the Revolution, paying particular attention to the portrayals of the women in adaptations, one can discern shifts in the way these establishment writers viewed the French nation – and the role they saw for the women within it. Looking at three different French Ossians – those of Pierre Le Tourneur (1777), Antoine Vincent Arnault (1796), and Pierre Baour-Lormian (1801) – reveals not only the ways in which the adaptations create a sense of sympathy between the ossianic heroes and the French readers, but also growing anxieties concerning women's participation in the new political process. The re-translation of the poems across this incredibly tumultuous period in France – and specifically the differing treatment of the character Malvina in the “Death of Oscar” poem in each version – serves as an indicator for how changing gender politics affected the poems' reception, particularly regarding the contentious issues of women's political and combat participation – two ideas that were linked in Revolutionary France – and female suicide.

James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian*, first published from 1760-65, quickly became renowned for two things: their influence on literary and artistic taste throughout the later 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and the controversy surrounding their authenticity. While the provenance of the poems was being debated in Britain,



becoming a touchstone for polemics regarding British attitudes to Scotland and frequent subject of Samuel Johnson's diatribes, they became immensely popular both within Britain and throughout Europe – in fact, the popularity of the name “Oscar” throughout Europe, from Oscar Wilde to the kings of Sweden, is due to the cultural impact of the Ossian poems. Despite the vicious debate over whether the poems were genuine translations of authentically ancient Gaelic songs – one that was often politically-motivated and embroiled in contemporaneous tensions over Scotland's position in the union, exacerbated by the controversial appointment of a Scottish prime minister, Lord Bute, in 1762-1763 – the poems were widely admired by poets, politicians, and artists. Ossian was truly a cultural phenomenon in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. As the poems' popularity waned towards the end of the nineteenth century, critical attention towards them also receded and the poems were commonly dismissed as frauds with little interest besides their authenticity, or the lack thereof. After long being dismissed as worthless forgeries, the Ossian poems have seen a resurgence in scholarship since the 1980s, spearheaded by the efforts of Howard Gaskill and Fiona Stafford. Collections like *Ossian Revisited* (1991), the four-volume *Ossian and Ossianism* (2004), and *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (2004), as well as the growing scholarly interest in Scottish Romanticism, have recognized the cultural importance of Ossian both inside and outside Scotland. Particular attention has been paid to *Ossian's* role as a transnational cultural phenomenon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The reasons for *Ossian's* enduring popularity are severalfold. For one, the poems provided a well of new mythologies upon which European artists tired of the classical characters from Greece and Rome could draw. Dafydd Moore, in *Mysticism, Myth and Celtic Identity*, demonstrates this in his essay on Ossianic reception in Devon and Cornwall, suggesting that *Ossian's* legacy is its malleability and the ease with which it is converted into local and national mythology. Ossianic aesthetics become the tools to establish an alternate system of cultural valuation that recuperates local artifacts, releasing national publics from having to look for heroism only in Rome and Greece – and sparked interest in folklore studies to locate vernacular myths of homegrown heroes.

Furthermore, the poems inspired or encouraged some of the experimental forms of the Romantic and pre-Romantic era. In France, because they were translations, early translators could have a more experimental style and try out techniques that were otherwise controversial in the highly-scrutinized world of French letters. Indeed, it was not uncommon to present original work in French as a “translation from English,” as is the case for *L'Histoire de M. le marquis de Cressy*, a small novel with several other similarities to the *Ossian* poems.

Lastly, they presented a glimpse of the rugged and wild landscape of the Scottish highlands at a time when, thanks in part to the European enthusiasm for

natural science,<sup>1</sup> rocky and mountainous regions were more likely to be seen as beautiful and adventurous locations rather than merely inconvenient and dangerous.<sup>2</sup> Paintings and etchings, such as Susanna Drury's 1744 illustration of tourists exploring Giants' Causeway in Ireland, had begun to favor the sublime aesthetics of infinite vastness over the more orderly and open landscapes that predominated in earlier art.

The sublime, which became one of the predominant aesthetic keywords of the various Romantic movements in Europe has its roots in the writings of the first-century CE writer Longinus, whose treatise "On the Sublime" (*Peri hypsous*) was popularized by Nicolas Boileau's 1674 translation. The term "sublime" was then widely taken up by philosophers throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Of these works, one of the most influential on the artistic movements in both Scotland and France was Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757). In this piece, Burke links the Beautiful – the small, regular,

---

<sup>1</sup> *Bursting the Limits of Time: The Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* by Martin J.S. Rudwick provides a thorough history of the development of geology in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and how deeply embedded it was in the cultural, philosophical, and political debates of the age.

<sup>2</sup> Marjorie Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory* (1963) tracks the transition over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century from viewing mountains as gloomy, foreboding, irregular, and even sinful blemishes on a landscape to considering them as the sublime monuments we do today. Developments in astrology, theology, philosophy, and the birth of modern geology changed the way people viewed the earth and specifically their opinions on mountains.

and aesthetically pleasing – with Neoclassical art and the Sublime – the large, overwhelming, capable of overwhelming or evading comprehension – with Romantic aesthetics. The *Poems of Ossian* fit well within Burke’s depiction of the Sublime despite the subject matter being ancient: nature in the poems frequently appears as mountainous, obscured by mist, and wild. Moreover, the poems devote much time to the heightened emotions of the protagonists and their frequent weeping – something that would also be a herald of the Sentimental and Romantic novels of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The attention that *Ossian* paid to local landscape certainly was one of the main factors that enchanted readers, however it also took center-stage in the authenticity debate in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century. Eric Gidal’s *Ossianic Unconformities* details the surveying work undertaken in the 1870s by Arran Waddell and other eccentric scholars to try to prove the poems’ authenticity by mapping Scotland through Ossianic depictions of landscape. While they had mixed success, the biggest stumbling block were the extensive changes to the Scottish countryside through military roads, canal building, and the other far-reaching changes worked by industrialization and development. Part of the pull of the Ossianic landscape was that it described scenery that had already vanished long ago at the time of the poems’ publication.

Although much work since the 1980’s has focused on the international reception of Ossian, this recent revival of Ossianic interest, however, has devoted less

time to the analysis of Ossian's reception in France.<sup>3</sup> This is largely due to the impressive thoroughness of Paul Van Tieghem's 1917 study of French ossianism, *Ossian en France*, which extensively details the characteristics, historical contexts, and impact of all the major translations of *Ossian* from the eighteenth century into the twentieth. However, the English-language scholarship on *Ossian* since the 1980's, as well as further research into the history of suicide in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially recent studies on documents in the French police archives, has brought the poems into contact with new ways of thinking about gender, nationalism, history, and aesthetics that reach beyond the scope of Van Tieghem's 1917 survey. The translations of *Ossian* before, during, and after the French Revolution (as represented by Le Tourneur and Baour-Lormian's editions and a play by Arnault) – and in particular the way that the triple suicide at the end of the "Death of Oscar" fragment is reworked in successive translations – provide a case study for tracking shifting and unstable attitudes towards nationalism, gender, and suicide over the tumultuous long eighteenth century in France.

Le Tourneur, the man whose translations helped to popularize the works of Shakespeare in France, published his translations of Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal, translated from the Gaelic Language under the title Ossian, fils de*

---

3 Notable exceptions are Colin Smethurst's "Chateaubriand's Ossian" in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* and Dierdre Dawson's "Fingal Meets Versingetorix" in *The Scottish Enlightenment and Literary Culture*.

*Fingal. Barde du Troisième Siècle: Poésies Galliques Traduites sur l'Anglois de M. Macpherson* in 1777. This work included both the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760) – Macpherson’s first collection – and the epics, *Fingal* (1762) and *Temora* (1763). This work was the first complete translation of Macpherson’s *Ossian* into French. Many of the translational tendencies that characterize Le Tourneur’s version of *Ossian* make their first appearance in his translation of the title itself. Le Tourneur expands Macpherson's title to include “Barde du Troisième Siècle,” foreshadowing the other efforts his translation makes to contextualize the poems for his French audience. Following the sixty-seven page “preliminary discourse” that begins the book, Le Tourneur includes an eleven page “explanation of Gaelic names, cities, &c. in the poems of *Ossian*” that provides French definitions of all the Celtic names, in addition to the footnotes and endnotes appended to the poems themselves. However, this title, and Le Tourneur's translation as a whole, do more than simply provide added historical and linguistic context; they also function to re-situate the poems within a *connaissance* that is distinctly French.

From the title-page on, Le Tourneur’s translation encourages this shared sense of cultural identity by applying the word *galliques* to the poems rather than using the more common *erse*, the adjective applied to the poems in their original French publication in the *Journal Étranger*, as the work of an anonymous translator. Moreover, Le Tourneur spells the word *gallique* rather than the more commonly used *gaélique*. This is in keeping with the content in his *Discours Préliminaire*, where Le

Tourneur mentions that the most well-known of the Celts were those from the Gaules and that – contrary to the assertions of Tacitus – the Scottish highlanders were more closely related to the Gauls than the Germanic Britons (iv). The title itself, as Van Tieghem remarks, “reminds [the reader] that the ancient Celts of Caledonia were the brothers of the Gauls; it evokes preemptive sympathy in the French reader for the heroes who are not far removed from their own kin ...The reader of *Ossian*, a French humanist, is welcomed not as a stranger, but as a friend and almost-compatriot”<sup>4</sup> (Van Tieghem vol 1, 314). Linking the Celts to the Gauls, invites the French readers to see their own history in the poems of Ossian. While the *Journal Étranger* presented the poems as *erses*, framing them as a window into a foreign world, Le Tourneur's use of *galliques* holds up *Ossian* as a mirror, albeit one tarnished with the passage of time, through which the French reader can, at least partially, lay claim to and have a share in the ancient culture of the poems. This is a watershed moment in the reception of *Ossian* in France. The poems go from holding primarily linguistic interest, as they were first published in the *Journal étranger*, which specialized in translation and nascent philology, to kickstarting an interest in folk literature and local history in France. Le Tourneur's translation, the first complete *Ossian* in France, with its massive *Discours Préliminaire* and extensive apparatus, invested Ossian with

---

4 “gallique au contraire rappelle que les anciens Celtes de Calédonie étaient des frères des Gaulois; il rend d'avance le lecteur français sympathique à des héros qui sont à peu près de sa race...le lecteur d'Ossian, humaniste et Français, à l'accueillir non plus en étranger, mais en ami, et presque en compatriot” (Van Tieghem vol. 1, 314)

historical and mythic value and worked as a bridge between the poems' existence as curiosities for scholarly interest to the mass popular phenomenon they would become.

Le Tourneur's title and his extensive introduction and paratextual materials place the Ossian poems within a historicizing framework for a sympathetic audience, one which encouraged the reader to feel a personal stake in the world of the Ossianic heroes, as though they were its heirs. His translation of the poems themselves retains some key characteristics of Macpherson's prosody while also reshaping the poems to give them a more epic character by smoothing out irregularities and continuity issues between the poems and reducing the catalogue of epithets to a more manageable number, making more deliberate and obvious connections between the poems. His edition, particularly compared to the fragmentary versions previously available in France, which did not translate the epics, *Fingal* and *Temora* in their entirety, knits together the poems and the world they describe into a cohesive whole. Le Tourneur's *Ossian*, despite including the fragments as well as the epics is more regular than even Macpherson's – his translation and footnotes emphasize the continuity and repetition of the poems. Van Tieghem characterizes Le Tourneur's *Ossian* as “too complete, too regular: he offers a majestic series of poems that are prepared, explained, annotated, that are linked or pretend to be linked to each other, that avoid contradicting or repeating themselves; that are almost all, the shortest as well as the longest, neatly



epic in character” (Van Tieghem vol 1, 320).<sup>5</sup> However, although Le Tourneur smooths out the tone of the poems and knits them together perhaps too neatly, his edition retains several key features of Macpherson’s *Ossian*. As he renders the works in French, Le Tourneur maintains their prose-poetic form, translating sound as well as meaning. The parallels between Le Tourneur's translation and Macpherson's own can be seen in the following passages, in which many of the French sentences are essentially direct translations of the English:

Macpherson	Le Tourneur
<p>‘Sad is the sound of Swaran's voice,’ said Carril of other times! ‘Sad to himself alone,’ said the blue-eyed son of Semo.</p> <p>‘But, Carril, raise the voice on high; tell the deeds of other times. Send thou the night away in song, and give the joy of grief. For many heroes and maids of love have moved on Inis-fail: and lovely are the songs of woe that are heard on Albion's</p>	<p>les accens de la voix de Swaran sont sinistres – sinistres pour lui seul, repartit Cuchullin. Carril, éleve ta voix, &amp; redis les exploits des temps passés. Charme la longueur de la nuit par tes chants &amp; remplis nos ames d'une douce tristesse. Car la terre d'Inisfail a enfanté nombre de héros &amp; de jeunes filles formées pour l'amour. Il est doux d'etendre les chants de douleur dont</p>

---

5 *L'Ossian* “de Le Tourneur est trop complet, trop régulier: il offre une série majestueuse de poèmes qui sont préparés, expliqués, commentés, qui s'enchaînent ou prétendent s'enchaîner les uns aux autres, qui évitent de se contredire ou de se répéter; qui ont presque tous, les plus courts comme les plus longs, un caractère nettement épique.”

rocks, when the noise of the chase is past, and the streams of Cona answer to the voice of Ossian.' (Macpherson 45-6)	retentissent les rochers d'Albon, lorsque le bruit de la chasse a cessé & que les ruisseaux de Cona répondent à la voix d'Ossian (Le Tourneur 23-4)
--	---

In this passage, Le Tourneur translates not only the sense and sentiment of Macpherson's lines, but also their sonic qualities. Many of the changes that he makes to the meaning of sentences work to preserve the poetic aural qualities of Macpherson's prose. The repeated S sound that appears in the phrases "Sad is the sound of Swaran's voice... sad to himself... said the... son of Semo" also appear in the French version of the passage as: "les accents de la voix de Swaran sont sinstres - sinistres pour lui seul." Although a more literal translation of 'sad' in French would be *triste*, Le Tourneur uses *sinistre*, which in this usage translates more accurately as "ominous" or "bleak," in order to replicate and amplify Macpherson's alliteration. Further attention paid to maintaining the alliterative quality of the English version can be seen in Le Tourneur's use of "Charme.... chants" to replace "Send.... Song," where he again chooses an altered meaning in order to parallel Macpherson's sonic repetition. The denseness of this sonic repetition is characteristic of Le Tourneur's translation of the poems and is something that is much less marked in later editions.

This is not to say that Le Tourneur's translation falls completely in line with the work of Macpherson. This section also highlights some of the major trends to the

alterations in Le Tourneur's translation, the most striking of which is his treatment of epithets. As Van Tieghem notes, many epithets are simply eliminated, while others are replaced by ones of Le Tourneur's own invention. Carril is no longer "of other times" and the "blue-eyed Son of Semo" becomes simply "Cuchullin." Le Tourneur's translation is "inexact and refined [i.e.: too polished]:" he omits many epithets, particularly those concerning nature and color, but adds enough of his own ornamentation that his translation is noticeably longer than Macpherson's (Van Tieghem vol 1, 333).

Another example of the texts' divergence can be seen in the translation of "the joy of grief" as "*douce tristesse*." A literal translation of "the joy of grief" into French would be *la joie du chagrin*, which would not only have retained the sense of an emotion being possessed by its opposite, but also maintain Macpherson's original echo of a chapter title in Edmund Burke's *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, "Joy and Grief" (*Joie et Chagrin* in French). Burke's aesthetic ideas influenced not just Macpherson's prose but also the way that the characters of the poems were received by 18<sup>th</sup>-century society. Lisa Kozlowski's "Terrible Women and Tender Men" (in *From Gaelic to Romantic*) provides an excellent explication of the relationship between Macpherson's hero(in)es and Burke's categories of the sublime and the beautiful. She notes that, for the most part, Macpherson's characters adhere to the divided genders of Burke's aesthetics: men are sublime, women beautiful. However, there are numerous exceptions in the poems, enough to suggest that gender in the

*Ossian* poems is more complicated than Burke's aesthetic ideal. In Macpherson's poems, there is less of a clear divide between masculine and feminine, sublime and beautiful – this is particularly true of the fragments, which present a greater variety of character archetypes than the later epics.

Le Tourneur, however chooses a different strain of influence to frame his translation, one which draws upon his previous work as a translator. Though Le Tourneur is well-known as the translator of both Shakespeare and *Ossian*, his translations themselves are not often placed alongside one another. However, looking at Le Tourneur's translation of *Romeo and Juliette* reveals a parallel between Le Tourneur's Shakespeare and his *Ossian*. By writing *douce tristesse*, the semantic echo in Le Tourneur's translation shifts from Burke to his own translation of Shakespeare, whose *Juliette* cries out in one of the play's most famous lines: "*O dans cet adieu il est tant de douceurs*" (Act 2 Scene 2). The word "douceur" means "sweetness" or "gentleness," but it is also one letter away from the word "douleur" meaning pain. Thus, this word carries within it a similar juxtaposition of meanings as "*douce tristesse*." To align *Ossian* with Shakespeare at this time was certainly to place him outside of French artistic norms, linking the poems' Scottish Romantic aesthetic with those of other "northern" Romanticisms in England and Germany. Furthermore, in terms of the ways that aesthetics intersects with gender, Shakespeare's works do not rely on the same sharp contrast as Burke's aesthetic theories; for Burke the Sublime exists in great part through its contrast with the Beautiful:

On closing this general view of beauty, it naturally occurs, that we should compare it with the sublime; and in this comparison there appears a remarkable contrast. For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small: beauty should be smooth and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it deviates it often makes a strong deviation: beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy: beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. (Burke, Part III.27, “The Sublime and the Beautiful Compared”)

Unlike Burke’s aesthetic theories, Shakespeare’s dramas were more mixed in character. Although Ossian would be part of the rise of the Romantic movements, Le Tourneur’s translation emphasizes its Britishness and tragic qualities over the potential links to trendy new aesthetic movements. Lastly, the phrase *douce tristesse* foreshadows the prevalence of death and suicide – including female suicide – in Le Tourneur’s edition of the Ossian poems, thematic content which would become less prevalent in later French translations.

One of the *Fragments* that is regularly adapted and modified in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the “Death of Oscar,” a short poem that details the tragic deaths of three young people unable to resolve a love triangle, who all chose love and

loyalty over life. Oscar, the son of Ossian, and his closest friend Dermide, both fall in love with the same woman, Malvina. Realizing this, Dermide pressures Oscar into a duel and is ultimately killed, gratified that if he must die, at least he is dying at the hands of someone worthy (Macpherson 336). Oscar then tricks Malvina into shooting him with an arrow so that he can die by her worthy hand (Macpherson 337). Finally, Malvina kills herself, since there is no one left that is worthy to kill her but herself. In Macpherson's original and Le Tourneur's translation, the woman with whom both Oscar and Dermide fall in love takes the role of a warrior who moves within the same honor-bound and sentimental world as the two men. In Macpherson's version of the poems, when Oscar lies about his grief over killing Dermide, saying that he is sad because he cannot pierce a shield with his arrow, Malvina replies "Let me try, son of Caruth, the skill of Dargo's daughter. My hands were taught the bow, my father delighted in my skill" (Macpherson 337). She is a part of the same world as Oscar, not only because of her skill at archery but because she, like Oscar, inherits glory from her father. When she realizes that she has inadvertently killed Oscar, she too brings an end to her life, saying, "I have the soul of Dargo. Well pleased can I meet death" (Macpherson 337) and, after killing herself, is buried alongside Oscar and Dermide. Although Malvina is the only one of the three to commit suicide directly, while Oscar and Dermide both arrange to create circumstances in which they know they will be killed by someone else, the way her logic mirrors Oscar and Dermide's is remarkable – if she is worthy to take Oscar's life, she is worthy to take her own. The

tragic circumstances have given her access to the same economy of honor as her male companions.

In Macpherson's version of the story, Dermide, Oscar, and Malvina all take the same course of action regardless of gender. They love, and when access to that love is denied, by rejection or death, they seek death. Oscar and Dermide seek death at the hands of others claiming that those hands are the only ones fit to kill them. Malvina, however, is worthy to kill herself. One way to interpret her killing Oscar and then herself is through the lens of chivalric romance. Similarities between Macpherson's *Ossian* and chivalric medieval poetry have been evident to both modern critics and to Macpherson's contemporaries. Dafydd Moore's "*Ossian, Chivalry and the Politics of Genre*" cites the pamphlet *Fingal King of Morven, a knight-errant*, which demonstrates the similarities the poems have to chivalric romance, to contextualize *Ossian*'s chivalry within the politicized genre preferences of the eighteenth century. *Ossian* is able to successfully employ the elements of the romance that were coming back into vogue, "because its chivalry lacks the embarrassing paraphernalia of true romance. Although the poems are identifiably chivalric in all the ways the pamphlet suggests, Macpherson's Enlightenment sensibilities make sure they importantly lack the giants, enchanters and magical castles that did so much to bring the romance into disrepute" (Moore 27). In other words, Macpherson's poems keep the emphasis on the emotional content of the chivalric romance – but minus the obviously magical elements that had fallen out of

favor in the Enlightenment era. Even the way that deities are portrayed in the poems is relatively abstract – especially compared to their active participation in the epics of Greece and Rome.

The ending of “The Death of Oscar” can be viewed as an analogue for the medieval love test, a ritual in which “the woman is symbolically raised to the status of a man in order to be worthy of the quality of love reserved for male friendship... to be loved unto death as expressed in the following...: ‘I prefer to die with my friend... than to live in delight with another’” (Callahan 3). Through her participation in this morbid method of ascribing value to love, Malvina gains access to this quality of love-with-honor usually reserved for friendships between men in two ways. She is able to receive it from Oscar, as he dies at her hand, and she is able to express it herself through her suicide. Ultimately, although the world that they inhabit is structured around masculinity, and can only be accessed by a woman through her death, Macpherson's version of the poem shows Malvina as a contingent inhabitant of that world alongside the two men because her suicide gives her access to the masculine social world.

However, although Oscar deems Malvina worthy to kill him and despite Malvina drawing on a similar honor-based logic in order to justify her own suicide, her death is not entirely equal to those of her male companions. Of the three, Malvina is the only one who commits unassisted suicide. Dermide and Oscar put themselves into situations where they are certain that they will die – in fact, the degree to which



an act is completely suicidal escalates with each death. Dermide asks Oscar to kill him directly: “Let not my life pass away unknown. Let none but Oscar slay me. Send me with honor to the grave and let my death be renowned” (Macpherson 16). When Oscar refuses, Dermide challenges him to a duel in which he is killed. Although he does not commit suicide directly – and it is possible he could have been victorious – it is clear that Dermide’s own death is his preferred outcome. Having killed his friend, Oscar intentionally tricks Malvina into shooting him with an arrow. Although he does not directly commit the action that leads to his own death, it is the only possible outcome and Oscar deliberately engineers it. Malvina, however, “pierced her [own] white bosom with steel” (Macpherson 17). Despite the differing degrees of culpability in their own deaths, all three are buried together by the brook and feed the trees of the mountain.<sup>6</sup> Thus, despite the differing degrees to which they killed themselves directly, they share a similar treatment after death and are all remembered in song.

Although Malvina has contingent access to the respect and honor that Oscar and Dermide share, it is at a cost – she was only able to gain entry by taking her own life. Adam Potkay’s *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* comments on a gendered aspect to the deaths in Macpherson’s Ossian poems to ask, “why should the feminizing of an ancient ideal of civic and martial valor coincide with the death of women?” (Potkay 207). He suggests that the preponderance of dead, childless women

---

<sup>6</sup> In fact, dueling was treated very similarly to suicide under the French penal codes of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century, which will be discussed in detail further on.

and their frequent haunting appearances as ghostly shades occurs because the women, much like the Caledonian culture of the Ossian poems, once dead can only show up in dreams and in songs of remembrance – that is to say, the preponderance of dead and ghostly women is a representation of the way that the Caledonian culture has been rendered “barren” and no longer capable of reproducing itself – it can continue to exist only as a memory or a haunting.

However, while Potkay’s analysis is broadly true of Macpherson’s epics, in the earlier *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, it is not just women who meet their end in Ossian’s poems: it is youth in general. “The Death of Oscar,” the first poem Macpherson published and the one that was central to securing his funding to compile the collected work, does indeed tell the story of the death of a childless woman. However, her death comes only after the deaths of her two male friends, one of whom is Ossian’s son Oscar. The melancholy of Ossian’s world is not just that no children will be born; those already there do not outlive their parents. Lisa Kozlowski’s analysis of “The Death of Oscar,” which she mentions only briefly, posits the poem as an example of how Macpherson’s women fill the role of temptress by leading the men who love them into disastrous conflict. While there is certainly an undercurrent of that trope in the poem, the gender dynamics are more complex on close inspection. As in much of *Ossian*, it is not easy to sort out the conventional from the innovative in a story that, on the one hand, plays into traditional gender tropes but, on the other, leaves these tropes behind. The challenge that “The Death of Oscar” poses to

conventional gender norms, nascent French nationalism, and changing views of suicide can also be seen in the transformations the story undergoes in its French translations, two of which specifically eliminate Malvina's suicide.

The long eighteenth century saw massive shifts in how both the public and legal authorities viewed suicide. The main shift was in the secularization of suicide, which included the coinage of the word itself, and the shift away from the concept of "self-murder". Although suicide was not officially decriminalized until the Revolution, the 18<sup>th</sup> century saw a relaxation in juridical response to suicide and an end to the practice of conducting a trial to determine the guilt of the deceased. Title XXII of the 1670 Ordonnance Criminelle outlined the circumstances in which the body or memory of the deceased would stand trial (*procès au cadavre ou à la mémoire du défunt*): self-murder (*homicide de soi-même*), violating divine or human majesty (*lèse-majesté*), dueling, and armed rebellion (Doucet, Ordonnance Criminelle du mois d'août 1670). Although it was not uncommon to hold a trial for someone who committed suicide before this ordonnance was issued, suicide – though it was not yet known under that name – was now enumerated alongside treason as one of the crimes for which the deceased must be held accountable, because these crimes were seen to uniquely rob the king of his subjects.

It is important to note that, although the corpse was not literally put on the stand and cross-examined, it was very much the body that was on trial – and that would be punished – in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The punishment for self-homicide (and

dueling) was to be dragged through the streets on scaffolding attached to a horse (*une claie*) and then hung by the feet (Warée 385).<sup>7</sup> While suicide was still considered both a crime and a sin, the onus was on the friends and family of the deceased to show that he or she was *non compos mentis*, since insanity was considered exculpatory, and thus avoid the judgement of the law and the church, the public punishment of the body and the denial of a church funeral. Police and priests were often content to have a reason not to investigate further and many people who died by suicide were considered not mentally fit – and so not only exempt from police investigation but also able to have a quiet Church funeral (Merrick “Patterns” 6).

Dominique Godineau’s extensive study of suicide in 18<sup>th</sup>-century France shows how drastically the public opinion on suicide changed – though not in a strictly linear fashion – throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century:

The evolution of the understanding of suicide is equally perceptible following the lines of various models. Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century, admiration for suicide in the form of Seneca, stoic and philosophic, became a common thread in lettered discourse. The innovation was primarily in the ‘dehistoricization’ of the model in the final third of the

---

<sup>7</sup> This process was *de facto* ended in 1770 when the French Parliament forbade the embalming of corpses suspected of suicide and demanded that they be interred promptly, which rendered the public punishment – after an investigation and trial that could take months to complete – impossible. (Godineau, “Le Procès”)

century: while Montesquieu or Voltaire considered it part of history and wrote that it revealed the mores and behaviors belonging to a former age, it was in later times presented as something susceptible to being reactualized and imitated by contemporaries. In parallel, there was an emphasis on the death of unfortunate lovers or individuals with tormented souls, of which *Werther* incarnated the literary figure... Although, in writing and behavior, the first model, “philosophic,” carried more weight than the second until the end of the century, it doesn’t obscure the fact that both models were in play simultaneously in the 1770s.<sup>8</sup> (Godineau, *S’abrejer les jours*, “Conclusion”)

Le Tourneur’s translation of *Ossian* appeared in France at a time when cultural ideas concerning suicide were shifting. Although the act at the time was not entirely licit, it was more openly discussed than ever before, haven been taken up as an interesting topic for debate among public intellectuals such as Denis Diderot, Montesquieu, and

---

<sup>8</sup> *L’évolution de l’appréhension du suicide est également perceptible à travers la promotion de différents modèles. Antérieure au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, l’admiration pour le suicide à la Sénèque, stoïque et philosophique, devient un véritable lieu commun du discours lettré. La nouveauté réside surtout dans la « déshistorisation » du modèle dans le dernier tiers du siècle : alors que Montesquieu ou Voltaire le plaçaient dans l’histoire et écrivaient qu’il relevait de mœurs et de conduites appartenant à une époque révolue, il est ensuite présenté comme susceptible d’être réactualisé, imité par des contemporains. Parallèlement est mise en exergue la mort d’amants malheureux ou d’individus à l’âme tourmentée, dont Werther incarne la figure littéraire – précédée en France par la publicité donnée au double suicide des amants de Lyon. Que, dans les écrits et les conduites, le premier modèle, « philosophique », ait plus de poids que le second jusqu’à la fin du siècle ne doit pas cacher qu’ils se dégagent tous deux au même moment, dans les années 1770.*

David Hume. In addition, while strong censorship prevented French newspapers from discussing suicide in the lurid detail with which it was covered by the British press, underground publications would report on deaths by suicide along with other scandals of the day. Furthermore, while suicide notes were not generally published at the time, some were reproduced in police reports or circulated among friends of the deceased and underground journalists and are accessible to modern scholars. Finally, personal journals that were preserved with the intent of publication and serving as historical documents provided one more look into how suicide was viewed over the course of the long 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The stories of suicide related in the poem, “The Death of Oscar” also straddled the line of the two common understandings of suicide in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century: the Stoic and the Romantic suicide. While Goethe’s *Werther*, first published in France in 1776, would literally appropriate *Ossian* for the Romantic, the texts themselves could be interpreted in either model. On the one hand, the heroic and mythic elements – the duel, the mock battle, Malvina’s steely resolve – evoke the imagery associated with the Stoic suicide. On the other, the love triangle between Oscar, Dermide, and Malvina, as well as the desire to die rather than live without one’s love, more closely echo the pattern of the Romantic suicides.

The moral allowance or even approval that classical authors, particularly the Stoics, made for suicide had a marked influence on some of the key figures of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish literary and philosophical scene. In a letter in 1764 to his brother

John Home of Ninewells, Hume discusses the suicide of a friend and comrade in arms, Major Forbes. In the letter, Hume narrates how Forbes, having been seriously but not fatally injured in a disastrous battle in Brittany, calmly outlined to Hume why he wished to end his life rather than live on in disgrace. In “‘A Steady Contempt of Life:’ Suicide Narratives in Hume and Others,” Max Grober, in agreement with Seidler’s characterization of the stoic, “classical” suicide, illustrates the many similarities between the death of Major Forbes and that of Cato: “Like his ancient predecessors, Major Forbes is a man of learning and courage. Although he feels anxiety and fears for his honor, he is lucid and settled in his purpose. Like Cato he holds a lengthy conversation before he acts, as if to establish that his choice is not impulsive, and like Cato he allows his friend to believe his composure signifies that he means himself no harm. Like Cato’s, his first self-inflicted wound is not immediately fatal, and like Cato he expresses his determination to finish the job when he is able” (Grober 52-53).

In Hume’s later essay, “On Suicide,” where he turns explicitly to the classical examples of how “*Cato* and *Brutus*, *Arrea* and *Portia* acted heroically,” it is certainly possible that his friendship with real-life Cato stand-in Major Forbes exerted some influence on his thoughts on the matter. In this essay, Hume seeks “to restore men to their native liberty, by examining all the common arguments against Suicide, and shewing that that action may be free from every imputation of guilt or blame, according to the sentiments of all the antient [sic] philosophers” (Hume 2). Here we

can see that, as for the Stoics, suicide for Hume has everything to do with exercising freedom.

A further similarity between Hume's views on suicide and the Stoic approach is seen in Hume's reasoning for why suicide is not an evil against God. On this subject, Hume writes:

Tis a kind of blasphemy to imagine that any created being can disturb the order of the world, or invade the business of Providence! It supposes, that that being possesses powers and faculties, which it received not from its creator, and which are not subordinate to his government and authority. A man may disturb society no doubt, and thereby incur the displeasure of the Almighty: But the government of the world is placed far beyond his reach and violence. (Hume 17)

This claim that suicide cannot be an offense against god since it is not within human power to act in a way that is violent towards the creator seems to echo the stoic view of morality, where one is only morally responsible for the things that are *eph'umin* – “up to us.” Moral action, for both Hume and the Stoics, is limited to the things that an individual has power over. While Hume suggests that it is within human power to wrong society and to wrong one's neighbors (and goes on to argue that suicide commits neither of these wrongs), the overall order of the world is not something that is “up to him.” Hume also seems in agreement with the Stoic attitude that an imbalance of misfortunes can, for the virtuous man at least, make continuing to live a



dispreferred indifferent. In other words, from the point of view of Stoic philosophy, something of which the having or not having does not affect one's virtue and thus the value of which is non-absolute and is determined by circumstances. For the Stoics, the value of virtue is absolute and cannot be exchanged for anything else – things like health or education are preferred and pursued as a means to virtue, while things like ignorance, sickness, and in some cases life are avoided if possible because they impede the ability to achieve virtue – however they are not explicitly virtuous nor vicious and so are still considered “indifferents.” It is this philosophical outlook that Hume adopts when he suggests, in a manner that echoes some of the more economic language found in Epictetus, “that no man ever threw away life, while it was worth keeping” (Hume 21).

In addition, Stoicism had considerable influence on the intellectual heritage of Scotland, particularly influencing deterministic thinking. As David Allen writes in *Virtue, Learning, and the Scottish Enlightenment*, “the aspect of Stoicism which seems especially to have earned the admiration of such historians [i.e.: David Hume and James Beattie], moreover, as some of their Scottish predecessors, was the ability it gave to accept misfortune in the public arena with apparent equanimity. Or rather, Stoicism seemed the philosophy perhaps best able to offer causal determinism in the external world without actually allowing men to overlook the obligations of virtuous conduct – a fatalistic tendency encouraging precisely that private seclusion whose

taint they seem most to have feared” (Allen 212). It is this very equanimity that feeds into Hume’s views on suicide as well.

The influence of Hume’s views on suicide in France can be seen in the popular novels of his friend and regular correspondent, Madame Riccoboni. Her *Histoire du marquis de Cressy*, a pseudo translation of a non-existent English novel published in 1758, caused controversy in the newspaper for its depiction of an assisted suicide, one which makes an interesting juxtaposition with the fates of Oscar, Dermide, and Malvina. In *Cressy*, the eponymous Marquis is a rakish figure who seduces numerous women in the same social circle and doesn’t reform his activities even after marrying for money. In the novel’s final scene, his wife the Marquise kills herself by lining a teacup with poison, having her husband’s lover bring the water, and asking her husband to pour the cup. Just as Oscar tricks Malvina into assisting his death, the Marquise de Cressy tricks her husband. The other two women the marquis seduced commit a lesser social “suicide” by entering convents. Adelaide, certainly, describes her decision to become a nun in terms that strongly echo a suicide note, especially in a time that predates the secularization of views on suicide which took place in the late 1700s. She bids the marquis “*un éternel adieu*” from the “*fond d’un asile*” – the depths of a sanctuary – and hides herself in “*cette espèce de tombeau*” – “a kind of tomb” – in which she is a “*sacrifice volontaire*” and “*victime immolée*” (Riccoboni). Hortence, the third girl involved with the Marquis, does not leave a note on her way to the convent, but the text describes how, after the suicide of the

Marquise de Cressy, she “returns to her retreat, grieving a friend [*une amie*] whom she missed eternally and the mistakes that she could not forgive herself for” (Riccoboni).<sup>9</sup> This novel, coming out before the “secularization” of suicide in the late 1770s, was praised for its experimental style, but all three journals that reviewed it lamented the ending as illogical and depressing (Kaplan 4). In an anonymous letter, that was almost certainly written by Madame Riccoboni herself, she defends the Marquise’s suicide as an appropriate action for the character, while stopping short of defending suicide *tout court*: “Madame de Cressy was consigned to live with a man whom she still loved, but whom she would soon love no longer, who had lost her esteem and could never regain it” (Kaplan 11-12).<sup>10</sup> As in the story of Oscar, Dermide, and Malvina, it is a question of honor and esteem that drives the Marquise and her two friends, Adelaide and Hortence, to escape by whatever means they have available to them a situation that has, in their eyes, no possibility to regain honor or virtue.

Nevertheless, Hume’s defense of suicide and Riccoboni’s controversial novel come at a time when the pendulum is beginning to swing back toward the

---

<sup>9</sup> “*retourna dans sa retraite pleurer une amie qu’elle regretta toujours, et les fautes qu’elle ne put se pardonner*”

<sup>10</sup> “*Madame de Cressy est réduite à vivre avec un homme qu’elle aime encore, mais qu’elle n’aimera bientôt plus, qui a perdu son estime, qui ne peut jamais la regagner;*”

condemnation of suicide. Grober suggests that “in treating suicide as a courageous and great-minded exercise of freedom, however, Hume was swimming against the tide of history, for the representation of suicide in the eighteenth century was turning decidedly against the heroic” (Grober 54). This is particularly clear in Hume’s examples of the justified suicide, particularly Cato’s. Stories of justified suicide invite a reader who is inured to the anti-suicidal rhetoric of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to imagine alternate futures that would render the suicide unnecessary or foolish. Although Cato remains a powerful figure in the eighteenth-century imagination, Joseph Addison’s *Cato: A Tragedy* (first performed in 1713) nonetheless calls Cato’s actions into question when the final act hints that, had Cato the forbearance to stall his own death, he would have received the support necessary to turn back Caesar.

Interestingly, Grober finds the examples of Portia and Arria to be particularly troubling in this light: “Neither woman was obliged to die, and indeed Portia reportedly had to seize a brief opportunity for suicide while closely watched by friends and family determined to prevent it. Both might well have lived long and useful lives. Indeed, as women of the senatorial order, they might have continued to play an influential role in Roman politics, as both had done in years past. Even more than those of Cato or Brutus, the futures of Portia and Arria were unsettled” (Grober 62). It seems that, in Grober’s view and, as we shall see, in the imaginary of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, women possess an additional potential futurity that makes their

suicides even more questionable than the masculine stock examples of ‘classical’ virtue.

However, although the opinion in England was turning against the Stoic suicide, this was not necessarily the case in France. In fact, the Revolution decriminalized suicide in the September 25, 1791 *Code pénal*, bringing a formal end to the prosecutions that had grown increasingly uncommon throughout the eighteenth century. Whether in the face of the tyranny of the monarchy or the revolutionary mob, suicide became a politically legible act for French people throughout the Revolution, at least for a few years. Suicide clearly remained an ambiguous topic in France and was one of the many “excesses” of the Revolution that was curbed later on. In 1793, the *Code pénal* listed suicide, alongside treason and conspiracy, as one of the crimes where the possessions of the deceased (*les biens*) would be confiscated. In 1795, the new directors of the Paris police declared that those who committed the act of suicide ought to be punished for depriving society of one of its members, though suicide was not officially recriminalized in written law (Godineau 40). These sentiments suggest that suicide was associated with treachery; however, the periods associated with the highest rates of suicide during the Revolution were not connected to self-consciously political suicides in the mode of Cato, but rather were the product of people killing themselves due to misery and hunger. In her analysis of suicide during the Revolution, Dominique Godineau observes the sharp increase in suicides in the unbelievably cold winter of Year III, or 1795 – up to 40% of which were directly

caused by poverty. These suicide attempts were often public, in the form of people throwing themselves into the river. So in addition to the direct effect on their friends and families, these suicides left a strong impression on the Parisian public. The public image of suicide grew to include those who chose to drown themselves rather than die of hunger, in addition to the philosophic suicide of Cato and the Romantic one of Werther.

The ways that changing understandings of suicide and gender roles circulated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century can be seen in the ways that Malvina's suicide in the poem the "Death of Oscar" is adapted after the French Revolution. The play *Oscar, fils d'Ossian*, the first dramatic production of *Ossian*, was written by Antoine-Vincent Arnault and had its first performance in 1796, the fourth year of the First French Republic. This version bases itself on Le Tourneur's poems, referring readers wanting to know more about the Ossianic world to his translation in the play's preface, however it resets the story of the poem in order to raise it to France's most prestigious artistic venue, the theater, by setting the poem into alexandrines<sup>11</sup> rather than Le Tourneur's more experimental prose.

The play follows some of the traditional rules of French drama. Although these rules were relaxed after the French Revolution, the classical unities were still

---

<sup>11</sup> The alexandrine is a French verse form made up of twelve-syllable rhyming couplets. The form is associated with the plays of Corneille and Racine as well as French translations of classical texts, an equivalent of the hexameters found in those texts.

critically enforced until the mid-1800s. *Oscar, fils d'Ossian* meets the requirement for unity of action, having only one main plot: the resolution of the love triangle between Oscar, Malvina, and Dermide, and the unity of time: the drama resolves itself within approximately twenty-four hours, since only one evening is mentioned, between acts two and three. The unity of space is slightly broken as one act takes place outside, in a hillside graveyard, however all other acts occur in the palace. By applying the alexandrine form and mostly observing the Aristotelian unities, Arnault's play contextualizes the Ossianic story within the French dramatic tradition in a fashion.

*Oscar, fils d'Ossian* makes many changes to the story in the original poems in order to give it a more conventional dramatic plot. In the original story, as we saw, Malvina chooses Oscar over Dermide, and so Dermide asks Oscar to kill him. However, in Arnault's version, Malvina and Dermide are married before the play begins and have a son. The play begins with Malvina lamenting that Oscar, Dermide, and her son Fillan are all away risking their lives in battle in a foreign land. Oscar returns, alone, having been separated from Dermide and Fillan, with no knowledge of their fates. Oscar is tormented by his love for Malvina until one day a bard arrives. Dermide, with what he thought was his dying breath, gave the bard a message, which asked Oscar to marry Malvina and be a surrogate father to his son, who Dermide knew had been captured alive. Malvina does not assent enthusiastically to the marriage and is more concerned about the welfare of her son. After promising to rescue him, Oscar is able to get her to agree to the marriage. Before Oscar and

Malvina can be married, Dermide returns, alive. It is then that Oscar asks Dermide to kill him. The two fight and, as in the original, Dermide is slain. Oscar returns to the castle, reveals what he has done, and kills himself. As he dies, he asks Malvina to live on and care for Dermide's son. This plot, which centers around miscommunication and the return of a husband presumed to be dead, fits into expectations of a dramatic narrative much more neatly than the story presented in the original poems, since the conservative world of the French stage demanded a five-act structure such as the one developed in *Oscar, fils d'Ossian*.

The alterations to the story also create a different portrayal of Malvina than the other versions. Malvina has a more vocal and sustained role in this version of the story than in any other. She has a speaking role in the first scene of every act, and in many other scenes as well. However, despite being given this voice, she has no role in the play but to follow the dictates of the men, first of Dermide, then of Oscar. There are several points in the play where Malvina's opinion is sought after, yet they are almost always paired with references to her silence. After Dermide has left and is presumed dead (act two, scene four) Gaul, a friend of Oscar tells him to “look at Malvina, mute in the middle of this chaos... Well, what do you want, Malvina?”<sup>12</sup> (Arnault 2.4.34, 36). She replies, “Do not wait for my weak reason to guide your way.

---

12 “Vois Malvina, muette au milieu des allarmes;... Eh Bien! Qu'ordonnez vous, Malvina”



What would it give you in this extreme disorder when I cannot even guide myself”<sup>13</sup> (Arnault 2.4.40-43). Furthermore, after Oscar asks her to marry him, noticing that she seems troubled, he inquires as to the reason for Malvina's “mournful silence” and whether she has accepted his offer to rescue her son in exchange for her hand in marriage, in accordance with Dermide’s wishes. She replies, citing her motherhood as justification for her assent: “It's sufficient... as for the rest, approve of my silence, and believe completely in my obedience”<sup>14</sup> (Arnault 3.2.49-50). She is repeatedly asked to speak, but only provided she do nothing with her speech. Using “silent” as her epithet before she speaks closes off the possibility of her voice having a real effect on the action before she even opens her mouth.

However, despite her pervasive silence, Malvina does survive the tragedy. Macpherson's poems, such as *Fingal* or the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* that preceded it, tell story after story of young men and women in love committing suicide in various ways, one after the other, until they begin to seem indistinct and inevitable. In the poems, no one has living children. Ossian has survived his son Oscar; in *The War of Innis-Thona*, Annir's two sons are dead and, although his daughter is returned to him, it is implied that Ossian outlives her as well, since she too is counted among a “dream of [his] youth” (Macpherson 266). Youth and life do not endure in these

---

13 “N'attends pas/Que ma faible raison guide aujourd'hui tes pas./Et qu'en obtiendrais-tu dans ce désordre extrême;/Quand je la cherche envain pour me guider moi-même?”

14 “Il suffit... sur le rest, approuvez mon silence;/et croyez seulement à mon obeissance”

poems. Even the sun's youth is limited and one day it will become “dark and unlovely... like the glimmering light of the moon, when it shines through the broken clouds” (Macpherson 346-7).

This pervasive extinction of youth speaks directly to Macpherson’s fears that the Gaelic culture of Scotland is dead and in danger of disappearing even from memory. Having lived through the 1745 rising, Macpherson witnessed the violent suppression of the Highland ways. The Ossian poems, published less than twenty years later, are in part an elegy for this Highland culture within a unified Scotland. They express, through the constant internal destruction of youth and young people like Oscar, Malvina, and Dermide, the last memories of a culture that has no next generation. It is, in fact, death that unifies the three because extinction takes no notice of gender. In Arnault's version of the story, however, not only does Malvina survive; she is a mother. The final words of the play, “Care for your son” (Arnault 5.4.43), suggest that her role, having survived the tragedy, is to educate and bring forth the next generation. Malvina is still denied access to fraternal love – indeed the play opens with her lamenting that the important men in her life have all gone off to battle together, leaving her alone – in this version. She is also explicitly placed into the category of mother at the same time, thus even more strictly defining her position as woman. She is not allowed to kill herself not only because the bonds of fraternal friendship are not extended to her, but also because she has the social responsibility, given to her by Oscar, of caring for her son. The final moments of *Oscar, fils*

*d'Ossian*, in which Malvina is not only spared from death but also called to fulfill a maternal duty, fit well with Susan Maslan's analysis of *Le mari coupable* (1792) in *Revolutionary Acts*. The play, by Villeneuve, tells the story of the adulterous Dorfeuil in which both the adulterous husband and the young girl with whom he has an affair are rehabilitated in society's eyes. This resolution "shows that in the new world of the Republic, society needs every single one of its members because, unlike a monarchy, a republic is nothing other than its citizens" (Maslan 22). In fact, Malvina is not the only ancient suicide averted in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century: Sappho's reception undergoes a parallel reception in France over the same time period. As Joan DeJean remarks in her thorough survey of Sappho's reception in France, depictions of the poetess completely disappear during the revolutionary period and when they do return in the Napoleonic era, it is frequently in the form of *Phaonades* celebrating Sappho's supposed (male) lover rather than the poet herself. DeJean suggests that Sappho stories would not have been appropriate for the Revolution since at that time she fell into two topoi, the lesbian and the suicide, both of which were inimical to a society concerned both with building its future and with the threat of depopulation (DeJean 187). Men dying in battle – though incredibly detrimental to the nation, and in fact one of the main causes of the anxieties over population – was justified as necessary and heroic; women dying was a threat to the new nation and one which was not so easily justified.

This anxiety over women's suicides extends beyond the realm of literature – the treatment of Malvina and Sappho – and into the real-world juridical treatment of women suspected of committing suicide. The vast majority of cases investigated and prosecuted were of men, and almost all of the women who were tried had the sentence overturned on appeal. Perhaps contemporary misogyny was inclined to view women as less capable of choosing rationally to end their lives; perhaps there was general squeamishness about the prospect of dragging a women's body naked through the streets on the *claire*. In fact, the only woman whose sentence was confirmed in appeal by the Parisian Parliament was not truly a suicide but a maid, Marie Le Chantre, who died in 1755 while attempting to procure an abortion and was condemned in effigy in 1758 (Godineau, "Le Procès"). The only other woman whose body was publicly punished was a young pregnant woman from Château-Gontier who poisoned herself in her despair. Her body was exhumed, condemned, and in a public square, the executioner cut her open to extract the fetus and pulled out her organs. She was burned and her ashes were scattered to the wind (Godineau, "Le Procès"). The condemnation of Marie Le Chantre and the horrific treatment the young woman from Château-Gontier's body endured suggest that, while women's suicide was an uncomfortable topic that many wanted to ignore as best they could, the crime for which there was true social venom was infanticide. Although not enumerated among the crimes for which one could be tried post-mortem, the judges of the day used suicide law as an avenue to publicly and severely punish these women. For men, suicide was linked to treason both in the letter of the law and the similarity of the

punishments – for women it was linked to infanticide. Thus it is no small wonder that female suicide is increasingly taboo as a nation becomes more and more worried about its reproductive futurity. In *No Future*, Lee Edelman discusses how the body of Matthew Sheppard was displayed by his murderers “like a scarecrow” – a warning to others that “the cradle must always rock” (Edelman 116). Suicide, like treason, was condemned because it was seen to take a subject away from the king, or later, a citizen away from the republic. While women’s status as citizens and subjects was legally and philosophically up for debate at the time, their role in shoring up the reproductive futurity of the nation was not. Suicide, as actual or future infanticide, haunted the treatment of women’s trials.

That Arnault's play ends with the continuation of culture through motherhood seems appropriate for a work published amid the cultural reorganization of France between the years of the Terror and the rise of Napoleon. During this time, France is trying to re-imagine itself as a Republic that is simultaneously new, in that it has just thrown off the old regime, and ancient, in its neoclassical values. In this sense, the Ossian poems are fitting material for Republican literature since they, too, are simultaneously ancient and novel. They tell stories about an ancient culture, and serve as nation-founding epics, while also being emotionally attuned to the sentimental mindset of post-Enlightenment Europe, which they played no small part in reflecting and inspiring. In Arnault's play, the clans of Ossian serve as allegories for the Republic, rather than the relatives of ancient Gauls as in Le Tourneur’s presentation.

It follows, thus, that his adaptation would strive to present Ossianic culture as something that has the possibility to move towards a future rather than as a dead end, by leaving open the path of Malvina and her son.

Le Tourneur's translation was the basis of many other French translations, which often, as with Arnault's play, took the form of versifications. "Ossian became fashionable just at the moment when intrepid versifiers infiltrated without discretion all genres, when verse translations multiplied, and when all thoughts, all paintings, whether indigenous or foreign, were reset, whether they wanted it or not, in the dress of the classical alexandrine" (Van Tieghem vol 2, 38).<sup>15</sup> One such translation in verse is Baour-Lormian's 1801 version, which was rumored by Lamartine to have been commissioned specifically for the French army. According to Van Tieghem, this story is likely apocryphal as Baour-Lormian was working on Ossian before receiving Napoleon's patronage (Van Tieghem vol 2, 43). Nevertheless, Baour-Lormian certainly did benefit from an emperor who was well-disposed towards Ossian – Cesarotti's Italian translation was among Napoleon's favorite literary works, and he did go on to become one of Baour-Lormian's financial supporters. Furthermore, the first edition of the poems was an "elegant pocket volume, easy to slide into a pocket,

---

15 *"Ossian se trouve à la mode justement à l'époque où d'intrepides versificateurs abordent indifférament tous les genres, où se multiplient les traductions en vers, où toutes les pensées, tous les tableaux, indigènes ou étrangers, revêtent bon gré mal gré la livrée de l'alexandrin classique"*

to read on a promenade” – indeed these editions would fit nicely into a soldier’s coat pocket or pack if he were to take it with him to the field (Van Tieghem vol 2, 52).<sup>16</sup> In contrast to Le Tourneur’s extensively annotated and ‘complete’ *Ossian*, Baour-Lormian’s was abridged and portable, lacking prefatory historical details. In terms of annotation and historical context, Baour-Lormian’s *Ossian* is almost antithetical to Le Tourneur’s heavily-annotated version. Baour-Lormian’s *Ossian* rivaled Le Tourneur in terms of popularity as well: Van Tieghem credits it with “incarnating by its character and its success the apogee of French Ossianism” (Van Tieghem vol 2, 38).<sup>17</sup> By being more affordable, more suited to conventional tastes, and aligning itself aesthetically and thematically with the apogee of Napoleonism, Bour-Lormian’s *Ossian* found a place not just in the realm of popular literature but also among the proto-nationalistic canon. The influence of *Ossian* continued in the Napoleonic era among women as well – Germaine de-Staël’s *Corinne ou l’Italie*, a novel heavily influenced by the tone and tropes of Ossian (it even includes an episode in which Corrine goes to Scotland), was published in 1807. Although there is no evidence suggesting which version of *Ossian* de-Staël read, Bour-Lormian’s cheaper and more readily-available edition certainly expanded the audience and encouraged the appetite for more Ossianic literature.

---

16 “un élégant petit volume, aisé à glisser dans la poche, à lire à la promenade”

17 “incarne par son caractère et son succès l’apogée de l’ossianisme français”

Rather than following in the footsteps of Cesarotti, Napoleon's favorite translator of *Ossian*, whose translation of the prose-poems into hendecasyllabic unrhymed verse, rather than the more popular ottava rima, was courageous and innovative if not unique (Reception 274), Baour-Lormian chose to set the poems into various more traditional forms, including alexandrines, the French epic meter, and to adhere to the rules of French classical poetry. Despite the huge success his *Ossian* brought him, Baour-Lormian's tastes were not aligned with the poems' romantic artistic heritage but were rather "purely classic" (Van Tieghem vol 2, 45).<sup>18</sup> Moreover, he was decidedly anti-romantic, going so far as to reproach Romanticism with being an import from Scotland and Germany. This highlights a broader difference between the two translators: while Cesarotti was part of an anti-classical movement in Italy, Baour-Lormian was "pure classic."<sup>19</sup> A typical example of Baour-Lormian's classical style can be seen in the first four lines of "Hymne au Soleil," adapted from part of "Carthon:"

*Roi du monde et du jour, guerrier aux cheveux d'or*

*Quelle main, te couvrant d'une armeur enflammée,*

*Abandonna l'espace à ton rapide essor,*

---

18 "Après son accès d'ossianism, Baour était redevenu pur classique"

19 For a more detailed look at Cesarotti's Italian *Ossian*, see Enrico Mattioda's "Ossian in Italy: From Cesarotti to the Theatre," *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*.



*Et traça dans l'azur ta route accoutumée* (Baour-Lormian 78)<sup>20</sup>

In true alexandrine form, each line contains twelve syllables. Baour-Lormian's form is even more classical, since the caesurae divide the lines into four parts rather than the tripartate alexandrine favored by later Romantics. The verse also strictly follows the four classical rules of French poetry. No line in this stanza, or in the poem as a whole, ends in an unelided vowel sound, or hiatus. The lines alternate between paired masculine and feminine rhymes that match not only aurally but visually as well. For example, the ending adjectives *enflammée* and *accoutumée* both appear in their feminine, singular forms not only to serve as feminine rhymes but also because a mismatch in gender or number would disrupt the visual rhyme of the word. Finally, there is rarely enjambment and most lines contain a complete syntactic thought. The alexandrine meter, coupled with these rules, is the standard measure for French classical poetry. Works such as the *Iliad* and *Aeneid* were published in French in this format. Baour-Lormian's lines are, in general, almost "too smooth" both through their predictable formats and the "poorness" of the rhymes – most of his pairings are extremely conventional. While some of his looser versifications come closer to a more "rugged sublime" Ossian, Baour-Lormian's translation is marked by an over-

---

20 "King of the world and of the day, golden haired warrior,/Which hand, that covered you in flaming armor,/Abandoned empty space to your rapid rising,/and traced through the sky your accustomed route"

arching classical bent, framing Ossian as *l'Homère du nord* and placing emphasis on the ways that the *Poems of Ossian* parallel the epic poetry of the Romans and Greeks.

By highlighting the neoclassical elements of the Ossian poems, Baour-Lormian's translation does more than smooth out the experimental style of Macpherson's and Le Tourneur's prose poetry; it adapts the poems to the imperial climate of Napoleon's France. Baour-Lormian's classicism coexists with the other militaristic and neoclassical representations of Ossian that pervaded Napoleon's France, including the famous paintings by Ingres. It is fitting that an edition published in the years leading up to the military foundation of the French Empire should adopt a style emphasizing the elements of Ossian that most resemble the nation-founding, militaristic epics of Rome. Like Le Tourneur's translation, Baour-Lormian's abridged, more portable edition serves as a point of entry into the world of Ossian for the French reader. However, rather than presenting the poems as valuable historical artifacts that provide a link to a past forever lost and a glory impossible to regain, Baour-Lormian's *Ossian* provides a collection of inspiring tales of heroism and serves as a source of nationalistic spirit parallel to Virgilian epic. Shifting the tenor of the Ossian poems from the more experimental and Romantic style that they had in earlier editions to a more stolid neoclassical mode reflects the poems' new position in the Napoleonic French canon. The unseemly, unglorious elements – such as Malvina's suicide or the prose styling of the earlier editions – are smoothed out, part

of a larger pattern of versification in French literature, into regular rhymes and artificially regimented lines.

These nation-founding connotations in the Ossian poems in Europe parallel the sentiments with which they were met in Scotland when they were published. Leith Davis remarks in *Acts of Union* that the poems are “forgeries” of a different kind: through their conflation of low- and high-land cultures and their imagination of a pre-clan, unified culture in Britain, the poems forge an ethnically and culturally unified British-Celtic origin that is reformed through the joining of Scotland and England. Davis argues that in addition to bridging cultures of sentiment and Neo-classicism (and the gendered implications of these aesthetics), the Ossian “poems and the controversy surrounding them, particularly as represented by Samuel Johnson, served as a public focus for the continuing negotiation of the relationship between Scotland and England after the Bute affair” (Davis 89). The national uproar around Lord Bute, a Scot’s, appointment as Prime Minister and the wave of anti-Scottish sentiment it stirred up served as an indication that things were far from smooth when it came to Scottish-English relations. The popularity of *Ossian* in all of Britain, despite and indeed because of the authenticity controversy, provided an avenue for those in both Scotland and England to continue debating and discussing the tensions underlying their union.

The French translations of Ossian may also be working as forgeries, in the genealogical rather than literary sense, helping to create an imagined homogeneity as

a linguistically and culturally diverse space becomes a nation at a particularly politically unstable time. In the absence of autochthonic heroes – before the folkloric research spurred in part by the popularity of Ossian in France – Ossian’s heroes were acceptably proximal relations to use as temporary foundations of a nascent national identity. The imagined connection to the Gaulic heroes of Caledonia naturalizes the notion of the nation as a previously unified whole, which can be reaffirmed in the present day. In Antoine Vincent Vernant’s revolutionary drama, this notion becomes a call to build the next generation of a French Republic. In Baour-Lormian’s translation, produced during the Napoleonic wars, it feeds the ideology of empire, not only forging a band of brothers but also glorifying heroic military engagement for the sake of unity. However, their use in this role in France – and indeed in much of Ossian’s European reception – is as an intermediary, a transitory step on the road towards more “home-grown” heroes. As Dierdre Dawson notes in “Fingal meets Versingetorix,” the growing interest in France regarding its Celtic ancestors led to the re-discovery and reclamation of an autochthonic hero in the form of Versingetorix. However, Versingetorix’s rise to prominence would not have occurred if it were not for the research of the *Académie Celtique*, founded by Napoleon with the intent not just to increase anthropological and literary study but also to establish himself as the heir to that noble and heroic tradition (Dawson 220).

According to Murray Pittock’s introduction to *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism* (2011), one of the defining characteristics of a national

romanticism is a “taxonomy of glory,” where images and tropes are invoked as symbols of a glorious past. Pittock reads *Ossian* against William Robertson’s *History of Scotland* (1759). While for Robertson, “Scotland is childhood, Britain adulthood... Macpherson substituted a trope of vigor and decay for Robertson’s youth and maturity” (Pittock 4-5). Murray also suggests, in line with Ian Duncan and others, that Scottish Romanticism and the Scottish Enlightenment are in conversation with each other rather than simply in opposition. The two intellectual movements converge in Scotland while working out questions of nationality, identity, and historiography. The Ossian poems, both in their British and French reception, are frequently a point of contact for Romantic and Enlightenment tendencies throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They provide the building blocks for a taxonomy of glory and are valued for both the national and sentimental bonds they inspire. As Pittock writes:

Nationality was at the core of Enlightenment historiography in Scotland, since so much of it was a justificatory praxis for the teleological absorption of an older Scottish into a newer British society. It was thus a fit subject for Romantic engagement; and, moreover, its use of rhetorical strategy especially enabled that engagement which itself – as under Napoleon – valorized a “National Historicism.” (Pittock 8)

This taxonomy of glory, in Baour-Lormian’s presentation of the Ossian poems applies exclusively to men – while the play, *Oscar, fils d’Ossian*, shifted Malvina to

the role of mother, this nineteenth-century version of the poem reduces her role in a far greater manner. In the Baour-Lormian translation of the poem, Malvina (renamed Nina) is denied the access to warrior culture she achieves in Macpherson's original. In this version, Oscar shows Malvina the grave of Dermide, saying "Do you know that my murderous hands, in slaying Dermide have slain your love?"<sup>21</sup> (Baour-Lormian 146) and then kills himself. Instead of ending, as the Macpherson version does, with the "green earthy tombs" (Macpherson 337) feeding the mountain, the Baour-Lormian poem's final image rests with Oscar alone: "his blood runs, and mixes in the current of the stream"<sup>22</sup> (Baour-Lormian 146). Despite the changes that Baour-Lormian makes to the story, *The Death of Oscar* still ends at Oscar's death, focusing on an image of his lifeblood flowing back into nature. Though Malvina survives, her survival does not become a focal point or a source of hope. It is Oscar, his choice to kill himself, whose blood is nourishing the land. By having Oscar take his own life, rather than perish at the hands of Malvina, Baour-Lormian not only removes her from an active role in the poem, but also gives to Oscar the agential position which was originally accorded to her: being the only one worthy to take his or her own life. In the Baour-Lormian poem, Malvina is not an equal inhabitant of the violent and tragic world shared by Oscar and Dermide. She is, at most, a passive pair of eyes to witness Oscar's final moments.

---

21 "Sais-tu que ma main meurtrière/En immolant Dermide immola ton amant?"

22 "Son sang coule, et se mêle aux ondes du torrent"

By removing Malvina from the story's suicidal theme, the Baour-Lormian version of the poem puts even more focus on the homosocial relationship between Oscar and Dermide than the original Macpherson did. Dermide asks Oscar to kill him so that Oscar can “possess without rival the beauty that adores you” (Baour-Lormian 145). However, after slaying Dermide, Oscar cannot continue living with Malvina and instead kills himself so that his “shadow will unite with [Dermide's] wandering ghost”<sup>23</sup> (Baour-Lormian 146). For Oscar, the delight offered by romantic love cannot sustain a life deprived of masculine friendship. Because the poem ends with Oscar's death, Malvina is denied the opportunity to symbolically enter this friendship through suicide. Because she lives on, she is excluded from the bond that Oscar and Dermide share through dying together. In the original Macpherson poems, Malvina's suicide allows her entrance into this world of friendship, but in Baour-Lormian's version, Oscar kills himself, creating a definition of friendship based on fraternal love and determined by the exclusion of women.

In denying Malvina access to fraternal love, Baour-Lormian's translation reestablishes the strict gender boundaries that she transgressed in the original poems and promotes the ideal of a masculine bond that is founded partially through the exclusion of women. It places Malvina in the position of “supplement, non-presence...the role of the woman in Western narratives of heterosexual romance”

---

23 “*Mon ombre va s'unir à son fantôme errant*”

(Callahan 9), where she serves as a receptacle for male desires and generates no desires of her own. The woman's role as “non-presence” arises because fraternal love is glorified far above romantic love. This glorification of fraternal love in the Baour-Lormian translation is appropriate in a work that trades in the masculine heroism of classical texts. Baour-Lormian's version of *The Death of Oscar* depicts a homosocial world where men fight and die in battle that parallels the fraternal world of the *Grande Armée*, where women exist only as witnesses to the men, the combatants.

In fact, his exclusion of Malvina from the poem echoes the historical push to exclude female combatants and camp followers from the Army, which began in the Revolution and became fully codified under Napoleon and the emphasis on male friendship as a necessary requirement for social cohesion in the army. In the old army, depictions of the camp scenes were full of women – as nurses, companions, and even giving birth (Godineau “De la guerrière...” 7). Although it was uncommon to see women serve as combatants, there were several known instances throughout the ancient regime. However, the Republic, in 1793 instituted a push to remove women from the battlefield, both as combatants and in other roles. The motivation behind this was linked to campaigns led by women at the time to gain recognition as fellow citizens – since military participation was a path to citizenship and the Republic wanted to argue that women were “by nature” ineligible for full citizenship rights, it meant denouncing the female warrior as well. (Godineau “De la guerrière...” 11). This followed the larger trend outside the army to create sex-segregated social



spaces for men and women, where salons were increasingly replaced with men's clubs and women's societies, which characterized the nineteenth century.

When Napoleon came to power in the French army, he continued this practice of excluding women and instituted further reforms, particularly to increase cohesion and social mobility for enlisted men. As the army became more meritocratic, moving further away from the desolate conscripts of the ancien regime, it relied on ambition and emotional bonds to prevent desertion, rather than simply the fear of punishment. Men from humble means had the opportunity to advance to the rank of officer - but only if they earned the love and admiration of their fellow soldiers. Promotions were decided partially through democratic input: the rank-and-file would nominate three of their number, from which the next-promoted would be chosen. This in turn meant that many of those men who rose through the ranks of the army inspired fierce loyalty in their comrades and subordinates. As Brian Martin's investigation into "Napoleonic friendship" shows in abundance, Napoleon himself was the model of this kind of rule through devotion, at least in the early years, and his close friendships with his favorite commanders were well-known throughout the army. One of the most talked-about displays of friendship was Napoleon's deep mourning over fallen friends. When Lannes succumbed to gangrene, Napoleon wept openly at his bedside, in the mode of Achilles and Charlemagne, as well as scores of Ossianic heroes – including Oscar and Dermid. With the death of the aristocratic system, male friendships become less threatening because they no longer inspired the fear of class treachery. When the right

to rule is granted by ability and by democratic selection processes rather than in-born virtue, it is no longer ontologically threatening to the system of government that army officers should befriend one another. Women, on the other hand, were, in the popular imagination expressed in Ossian and elsewhere, only able to overcome the supposedly natural and inherent limitations of their sex because they had recourse to the supposedly natural and inherent virtues of their bloodline. These idealized friendships – and the notion that they could only truly exist in places devoid of women – also served as a recruiting tactic and a means to forestall desertion.

The interpretations of the *Poems of Ossian* by Le Tourneur, Baour-Lormian, and Arnault highlight different aspects of the Ossianic mythos in ways that are deeply tied to their intended audiences. In particular, the changing roles Malvina plays in these three adaptations of the ‘Death of Oscar’ fragment illustrate the changing expectations for women that coincided with the convulsive political changes in France. As the concept of France as a nation and then an empire coalesced over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the liberatory ideas which buoyed this burgeoning nationalism did little to lift the social constraints that governed women’s lives. Malvina’s suicide, like Sappho’s, becomes increasingly problematic for a French nation whose political momentum is dependent on common belief in and commitment to its futurity. The three moss-covered tombs and the dark, unlovely sun of the Ossian poems form a sharp contrast to the symbol of post-revolutionary France: Marianne, frequently lit from behind by rays of sunshine, leading the children

of the nation into an unseen but certain future. At the same time, the poems' mixture of classicism and sentimentality becomes part of the foundations of nineteenth century aesthetic taste. In Le Tourneur's translation, this poses less of a problem since his version of the poems stresses primarily their historical and anthropological qualities and happened to be published in a brief historical window when attitudes towards suicide in France were becoming more liberal. In the post-Revolutionary world, as suicide was again increasingly condemned and re-criminalized, at least in the eyes of the police if not the eyes of the law, and the Ossian poems were integrated into the canon of mythical inspirations for the French Empire, Malvina's suicide has to be recast or eliminated because of the particular anxiety accorded to female suicide.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allan, David. *Virtue, Learning and the Scottish Enlightenment*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993. Print.
- Arnault, A-V. *Oscar, fils d'Ossian: tragedie en cinq actes*. Paris. 1794. Print.
- Baour-Lormian. *Ossian, Poésies Galliques en vers français*. Paris: Didot l'aine, 1801. *Google Book Search*. Web. 23 July 2016.
- Callahan, Anne. *Writing the Voice of Pleasure : Heterosexuality without Women*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. Print.
- Davis, Leith. *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation, 1707- 1830*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999. Print.
- Dawson, Deidre. "Fingal Meets Versingetorix." *The Scottish Enlightenment and Literary Culture*. Ralph McLean, Ronnie Young, and Kenneth Simpson, ed. Lanham, Maryland: Bucknell University Press, 2016. Web.
- DeJean, Joan. *Fictions of Sappho*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989. Print.
- Doucet, Jean-Paul. "Ordonnance Criminelle du mois d'août 1670." *Le Droit Criminel*. [https://www.ledroitcriminel.fr/la\\_legislation\\_criminelle/anciens\\_textes/ordonnance\\_criminelle\\_de\\_1670.htm](https://www.ledroitcriminel.fr/la_legislation_criminelle/anciens_textes/ordonnance_criminelle_de_1670.htm). 2017. Web.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. Print.
- Hume, David. "On Suicide." *Essays on Suicide and the Immortality of the Soul: The Complete 1783 Edition*. James Fieser, ed. St. Anselm College. 1996. Web.

Gaskill, Howard ed. *Ossian Revisited*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991.

Print.

Gaskill, Howard ed. *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*. New York: Thoemmes, 2004.

Print.

Gidal, Eric. *Ossianic Unconformities*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press,

2015. Print.

Godineau, Dominique. "De la guerrière à la citoyenne. Porter les armes pendant

l'Ancien Régime et la Révolution française." *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*,

20 (2004).

Godineau, Dominique. *S'abrégé les jours: Le suicide en France au XVIIIe siècle*.

Kobo ed. Paris: Armand Colin, 2012. Ebook.

Grober, Max. "'A Steady Contempt of Life:' Suicide Narratives in Hume and Others."

*The Journal of Scottish Philosophy*. 10.1 (2002): 51-68

Kaplan, Marjin S. "Mme Riccoboni in Defense of Female Suicide: *Histoire du*

*Marquis de Cressy* (1758). *French Forum*, 42.1 (Spring 2018): 1-16.

Kozlowski, Lisa. "Terrible Women and Tender Men: a Study of Gender in

Macpherson's *Ossian*." *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations*.

Fiona Stafford ; Howard Gaskill ed. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998. Print.

Le Tourneur, Pierre. *Ossian, fils de Fingal, Barde du Troisième Siècle, Poésies*

*Galliques traduit de l'anglois*. Paris: Musier fils, 1777. *Google Book Search*.

Web. 23 July 2016.

- Le Tourneur, Pierre. *Shakespeare traduit de l'anglais*. Vol. 4. Paris: Merigot, 1773.  
*Google Book Search*. Web. 23 July 2016.
- Macpherson, James. *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*. Howard Gaskill ed.  
Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996. Print.
- Martin, Brian Joseph. *Napoleonic Friendship: Military Fraternity, Intimacy, and  
Sexuality in Nineteenth-Century France*. University of New Hampshire Press,  
2011.
- Maslan, Susan. *Revolutionary Acts*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.  
Print.
- Merrick, Jeffrey. "Patterns and Prosecutions of Suicide in Eighteenth-Century Paris."  
*Historical Reflections*, 16.1, 1999. Web.
- Merrick, Jeffrey. "Suicide and Politics in Pre-Revolutionary France." *Eighteenth-  
Century Life*, 30 (2006). Web.
- Moore, Dafydd. "Fingal in the West Country: The poems of Ossian and cultural myth-  
making in the South West of England, 1770-1800". *Mysticism, Myth and Celtic  
Identity*. Marion Gibson, Shelley Trower and Gary Tregidga eds. New York:  
Routledge, 2013. Print.
- Moore, Dafydd. *Ossian and Ossianism*. London; New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Moore, Dafydd. "Ossian and the politics of genre: the case of *Fingal King of Morven,  
a knight-errant*." *The British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 23  
(2000). Web.

Pittock, Murray. *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*. Edinburgh:

Edinburgh University Press, 2011. Print.

Potkay, Adam. *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume*. Ithica: Cornell University

Press, 1994. Print.

Riccoboni, Marie Jeanne. *L'histoire de M. le marquis de Cressy*. Kobo ed. Paris:

Gallimard, 2009. eBook.

Van Tieghem, Paul. *Ossian en France*. 2 vols. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1967. Print.

Warée, Barnabé. *Curisotiés judiciares*. Archive.org. Paris: Adolphe Delahays, 1859.

Web.