James Graeme, â??Rona: An Elegiac Balladâ?•

Description

JAMES GRAEME

â??RONA: An Elegiac Balladâ?•

â??The noise of war is on the breeze,
And can Hidallan stay?
My soul is in the strife of shieldsâ??â?•
He spoke, and burst away.

O! where shall Mornaâ??s maid repose,
â??Till heroes have their fame?
On Mornaâ??s silent hill of hinds,
Or by its rushy stream?

But what if in the hour of blood
The lovely hero fall?
While some dark warrior hangs his shield?
A trophy in his hall!

Leave, Slumber! leave the eye of tears,
Forsake my limbs, Repose!
Lean, love-lorn maidens! from your clouds,
And aid me with your woes.

Fair was Hidallan, as the flowâ??r
That dyes the dusky heath;
But raise not, bards! the mournful song
Around his stone of death.

How fell the hero? In his might,
Amid his growing fame!
Not feeble was Hidallanâ??s foe,
His sword a meteorâ??s flame.

No more shall Mornaâ??s hall rejoice,
The feast of shells be spread;
The sigh of Ronaâ??s secret soul,
In Deathâ??s dark house is laid.

Lour not on Rona from your cloud,
The rolling of your rest!
Not weak, Hidallan! was my sire,

No fear disturbâ??d his breast.

In aged Cairbarâ??s lonely hall,
The strife of heroes rose;
His was Rivineâ??s stolen glance,
And many were his foes.

In strength he graspâ??d his sword of fire,
The stoutest started back:
Not weak, Hidallan! was my sire,
Nor is his daughter weak.

Ah! whether rolls thy airy hall?
The sky its blue resumes;
Her fatherâ??s sword prepares the cloud,
On which thy Rona comes.

NOTES:

Title *Rona* The characters who appear in this poem are taken from *The Poems of Ossian* (1760) by James Macpherson, a collection of poems Macpherson claimed to have translated from Gaelic word of mouth but were, in truth, largely poems of Macphersonâ??s own creation based loosely in Gaelic or Celtic myths. Rona is the only character mentioned in this poem that does not appear in Macphersonâ??s *The Poems of Ossian*. The poems do, however, mention a character named â??Ronnan,â?• who is the male lover of Rivine mentioned in line 35 here (James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian*).

2 *Hilladan* The son of Lamor, one of Fingalâ??s heroes, whose love had been slighted by the woman Comala. He debuts in the poem â??Comalaâ?• in *The Poems of Ossian* (David Scott Kastan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, 170; James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian*).

5 *Morna* Also known as Muirneâ??first appears in â??Fragment 14â?• by James Macpherson prior to the release of *The Poems of Ossian*; debuts in â??Carthonâ?• in *The Poems of Ossian* as the daughter of Cormac (King of Ireland), sister of Classammor, wife of Comhal, mother of Fingal; â??fairest of maidensâ?• and â??beloved by allâ?• (James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian*).

5 *Mornaâ??s Maid* A maid whose proper name is Moina. In â??Fingal, Book Oneâ?• Cuthullin refers to her as the â??maid.â?• Moina is the daughter of Reuthamir, wife of Clessammor, and mother of Carthon (James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian*).

7 *Hinds* â??Female deer, especially of the red deerâ?• (*OED*).

13 *Slumber* The Gaelic goddess of sleep and dreams, Caer Ibormeith (Edain McCoy, *Celtic Womenâ??s Spirituality*, 246).

26 *The feast of shells* â??The ancient Scots, as well as the present Highlanders, drank in shells; hence it is that we so often meet, in the old poetry, with â??chief of shellsâ?? and â??the hall of shellsâ??â?• (James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian*).

28 *Death* Manannan mac Lir: a sea deity, the guardian of the Underworld, and the one responsible for ferrying souls to the afterlife (John Green, *Celtic Gods and Heroes*, 9).

29 *Lour* A gloomy or sullen look; a frown, a scowl (*OED*).

33 *Cairbar* First mentioned first in â??Fingal, Book Oneâ?• in *The Poems of Ossian*; he is the tyrannical lord of Atha and chief of the race of Fir-bolg; father of Degrena and Ullin, husband of Deugala, son of Borbar-duthul. He is slain by Moran, called the â??hoary chief of shells,â?• and he kills Cormac, the father of Morna (James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian).*

35 *Rivine* First appears in the poem â??Fragment 9â?• by James Macpherson prior to the release of *The Poems of Ossian*; also called the â??fairest of maids,â?• daughter of Conar, sister of Connan, lover of Ronnan. At the death of her brother and her lover, she had herself buried alive beside them (James Macpherson, â??Fragment 9â?•).

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions* (Edinburgh, 1773), pp. 51-53. [Google Books]

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