

(Finn: cont'd.)

is not a contradiction of Finn's tragic selfishness, for as will be seen, the hero with all his generous spirit, harbors a corroding covetousness.)

When some lines later Patrick asks, "Who or what was it that maintained you so in life?" Cailte replies, "Truth that was in our hearts, and the strength in our arms and fulfillment in our tongues." Here the motivating force that is the saga theme manifests itself.

Often within this frame story there is opportunity for the characters to sing lays or keen laments. The ebb and flow of the Celtic death meaning is a sound and a mood that many poets attempt to imitate, yet none ever really succeed, for their rolling organ dronings of a sorrowful heart lamenting a loved one is inimitable. John Synge comes close to it in the keening of *Moira in Riders to the Sea*, yet even here, the "poetry" is dependant on the acting. In the Fenian cycle, however, when Crede lies beside the body of her husband, Cael, pity and sympathy overwhelm the reader:

The haven roars over the
angry surf of Rinn Da Barc:
the wave against the shore
laments the drowning of the
warrior of Loch Da Chonn.

.....

Sad is the cry of the stag in
Druim Da Leis: the doe of
Druim Sileann is dead, and the
stag of Dileann laments her.
The poet has personified the sea
as one deeply sad that the dead
youth was washed into its waters.
All of nature mourns his passing,
and pervading the hearse, hollow
echoes of the widow there is a
muted melancholy. In this "frame
story" there are over a hundred

episodes, the entire amalgam
studied with both the tragic
and the gay.

Perhaps the greatest prose
in the Fenian cycle is the story,
"The Pursuit of Diarmaid
and Grainne". It is in this
tale, more than any other, that
the author's characterization
technique is revealed. Now an
old, tired and weary warrior,
Finn expresses a desire to have
Grainne as his wife. But at a
feast held in the great hall of
Tara the young and beautiful
maid "sees Diarmaid, the freck-
led, sweet-worded hero with the
dusky-black hair - Diarmaid the
gallant and engaging." The cun-
ning and intrigue that Grainne
is later to display more prom-
inently, is foreshadowed in this
scene when she drugs all at the
banquet, including Finn, casts a
"gessa" on Diarmaid so that he
is bound by honor to flee with
her from the castle that night.

The anger and wrath of Finn
foments and froths through the
tale (which is considered a no-
vel by some), as the leader and
his warriors stampede across the
bog in search of the pair. Finn
is unrelenting in his search for
the woman he desires and the man
who dares to defy the Fenian
code.

"There is the sweet breath of
Ireland's dawn in the passages
that ensue, describing the flight
to the Shannon, the pursuit th-
rough the trees of Doire-dha-
bhoth, the journey to Limerick,
and the wanderings in the wond-
erous glens of Kerry."

But the glory of all that is
green is not for long. As the
plot progresses, the conflict
heightens to a climax and the