

## THE POEMS OF BLATHMHAC: THE 'FRAGMENTARY QUATRAINS'

IN his *Poems of Blathmac* [(Irish Texts Society XLVII, London 1964), p. xiii, n.17] James Carney expressed the hope of being able 'in the future to print what can be recovered of the fragmentary quatrains not included in the present edition', from the unique manuscript witness, G 50 in the National Library of Ireland. This paper attempts to fulfil his stated intention and to present what is recoverable of the text, whether strictly fragmentary or not, after quatrain 259 of his edition.

Carney's tentative attribution [(p. x, n.5)] of G 50 to 'Michael O'Clery, with his normal hand somewhat disguised by an effort to imitate the character of his exemplar' is not sustainable. The hand in fact is also found in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MSS 4 (24 P 27), and 790 (23 D 17), additional material on f. 68 et passim.<sup>1</sup> Its occurrence in the latter manuscript, the 'O Clery Book of Genealogies', supposed to be in the hand of Cú Choigcríche Ó Cléirigh, one of the 'Four Masters',<sup>2</sup> shows that the scribe was associated with the Ó Cléirigh family, but the general character of the writing suggests that it is more likely to be that of an Ó Luinín.<sup>3</sup> We know that Giolla Pádraig Ó Luinín worked with Míchéal Ó Cléirigh and others on the 'Ó Cléirigh' recension of the LEABHAR GABHÁLA in 1631.<sup>4</sup>

A further association of the scribe of G 50 with Cú Choigcríche Ó Cléirigh is suggested by the later history of the manuscript itself. It came to the National Library as part of the Phillipps collection, and is listed in Sir Thomas Phillipps' *Catalogus* as having come from the library of Edward O'Reilly (*ob.* 1830).<sup>5</sup> It is item 14 in the O'Reilly sale-catalogue (30 November 1830) and is almost certainly the manuscript of Amhra Choluim Chille brought to Dublin in 1817 by John O'Clery of Drung, Co. Cavan, as part of what survived of his father's collection of Irish manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> This John O'Clery was a direct descendant of Cú Choigcríche (whose will, dated 1664, he preserved with the 'Book of Genealogies', already mentioned).<sup>7</sup>

The following is a transcript of the Blathmac material not edited by Carney, beginning with quatrain 260 on p. 141, line 23. Pp. 143-4 of the manuscript are verso and recto of a fragmentary leaf, a tiny portion of the top and a larger portion of the middle (which also has a hole in it and is very tattered at the edges) only surviving. The outer lower parts of pp. 141-2, like those of several leaves at the beginning and end of the manuscript, are discoloured from dampness, and also from exposure, being at the end of the manuscript and only partially protected

<sup>1</sup> I am obliged to Pádraig de Brún for this information. The hand can be seen in the second of the plates prefixed to S. Pender (ed.), 'The O Clery Book of Genealogies', *Analecta Hibernica* 18 (1951).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

<sup>3</sup> For Ó Luinín hands see that of Matha in London, British Library MS Cotton, Nero A VII, fos 132-57 (R. Flower, *Catalogue* III (London, 1926), pl. xiii), written in 1571; Conchubhar in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS 735 (A iii 2), written in 1693; and another Conchubhar in Dublin, National Library of Ireland, MS G 459, written in 1676.

<sup>4</sup> M. Dillon, C. Mooney, OFM, P. de Brún, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Franciscan library, Killiney* (Dublin, 1969), xii.

<sup>5</sup> For a description of the manuscript see N. Ní Shéaghda, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the National Library* II (Dublin, 1961) 66-8.

<sup>6</sup> Pender, p. xiii.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, xviii.

by the fragments of pp. 143–4. Expansions are in italics; square brackets indicate physical damage; angular brackets indicate where the manuscript is illegible; tentative readings are in round brackets.<sup>8</sup>

p. 141.23

- 260** Ar attat laithi rioghdha. donaibh noebhaib andaghdila  
bithsi digdi der a mbroin. in morchath sleibhi sioin
- 261** Cerumha re righ na riogh. Maire foirndecht na ainbfior  
as cach *coma* boing fíor fair. do doinibh 7 demhnaibh
- 262** Cruth meabhais re *Crist* an cath. ní don feith nach deinmnetach  
co mbreith fíor *for* a gnimh cert. co miadhamhla mesamnacht

Olas

p. 142.

- 263** Olas Iosa miastar cach. i llaithi mesa *fri* a fírbhrath  
ce fí[ . . . ]noir fíronn an tan. 7 *gach* naon bas traucar
- 264** As bias lan d(o)na uadha. i llaithiu na morbuana  
eatar<sup>gar</sup>*faidher* (on) mbert. coirci cuindfech *fri cruithnecht*
- 265** Foidfidh fo tuaidh *cruaidh* costadh. an coirci dia oghlos<sup>gadh</sup>  
for a leith ndeis comradh cert. do breth leis a *cruithnecht*
- 266** Scar<sup>faidh</sup> c(o)lg sin 7 caith. fíria findudh [*blank space*]  
do coiser *cruithnechtaí* claind. an coimde inna iotbloinn
- 267** (As) do mac d(u)a ní ba breg. miastar in da moirthred  
scar<sup>faidh</sup> mairg na tais a tnu. caircha geala *fri* a mind[u]
- 268** Duso ferr *forra* a leith ndes. a caorcha iar na nglainmes  
do chum nífernn trogbreg. foidhfidhior an gabhairtred.
- 269** (C)o lla(thi) a bas bi ur(*chra*). as dot mhac it paruula  
[ . . . ]Iosa *Crist*geal. fa deisin rotsamlastar
- 270** D(aes) [a]n pecaidh dob[*uird*]uibh. an coirce 7 an gabhair  
< . . . > s aesaibh d < . . . > aibh doinn. an *cruithnecht* na glanchaoir
- 271** M < . . . > a ba(s) maith (s)ar sin. *fíris* na hingru nis fífir  
(as) nach fetar (tarc)uomsiu. bochta 7 adhailchniu

<sup>8</sup> I wish to thank Liam Breatnach and Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha for reading my transcript. I am grateful to Seán Malone and Ciarán Magee of the Photographic Department, Garda Headquarters, Phoenix Park, Dublin, for applying their expertise to the stained parts of the manuscript, unfortunately without success, and to Patricia Donlon, Director of the National Library, who negotiated that facility for me.

- 272 < ... > t as pec < ... > an tan sin. fo c[ ... ]nainbfial nesamain  
< ... > ar tarbas (a) rind do meirg. cid in araillsiom do firfeir[g]
- 273 < ... > cruaidh do g < ... > tha. as fars(i)g do firbrotha  
Iosa *Crist* < ... > nsion hic < ... > . mesa ni adidroilli
- 274 < ... > doibh comairle / < ... > *cht* a miadhamhlae  
< ... > lo < ... > o < ... > at / < ... > as[ ... ]roillisiot
- 275 < ... > feibh do br < ... > / < ... > dot atron < ... > gortaidhsur  
< ... > rel < ... > eo < ... > / < ... > a do daghthuarai
- 276 (Bear) < ... > den u < ... > ar l < ... > / < ... > on iotaigsu  
(m) < ... > ar < ... > *cht* < ... > arm o d < ... > i / ni do  
dortaibh daghdighe

Ro bha

p. 143

- 277 Ro bha cen [ ... ] / [ ... ] / ni bhu [ ... ] / [ ... ]
- 278 Bas a [ ... ] / [ ... ] / nim r[ ... ] / [ ... ]
- 279 Ni sh [ ... ] / [ ... ] / n[ ... ] / [ ... ]
- 280 [ ... ] / [ ... ] / [ ... ] d / iar [ ... ] m / [ ... ]
- 281 [ ... ] aos o dam < ... > d it ga[ ... ] / clar m[ ... ]  
] cel in lobhar in nach du / ni dechaidh do[ ... ]
- 282 Ni meisi fen cia atbeir / do gres [ ... ]  
for mbochtain feisin batar / l[ ... ]
- 283 Na cuingidh ni arraidham / nil s[ ... ]  
ar ni baoi libh diamtha bi / [ ... ]
- 284 Do bhera forra cen acht / s[ ... ]  
7 foidfidhius iarsin / du [ ... ]
- 285 Timartar demhna in tan / mis[ ... ]  
air do rerachtat a lli / d[ ... ]
- 286 Raha [ ... ] leo nach thioses [ ... ] / [ ... ]  
ar r[o] s carsat dith[ ... ] / [ ... ]
- 287 Mairg *conimregha* [ ... ] / [ ... ]  
la an golghairi a (lo) [ ... ] / [ ... ]
- 288 Borg de [ ... ] / [ ... ] / [ ... ] / [ ... ]

289-90 [torn away]

p. 144

291 [...]a(i)r(e)ch  
[...]

292 [...]da[...]l  
[...]

293 [torn away]

294 [...] (ain)  
[...] (ro) [...] ain

295 [...] < ... > igh [...] tur [...] ]  
[...] < ... > mha < ... > / < ... > (n)inghein

296 [...] < [...] > air  
[...] < ... > inghein

297 [...] < ... > an daghathair  
[...] < ... > (agan)aca

298 [...] < ... > ceile  
[...] < ... > c a(i)sa(n)

299 [...] < ... > a iomnacht  
[...] < ... > adir a *bret*haibh

300 [...] < ... > gnas bithfiornn  
[...] < ... > th < ... > a

301 [...] < ... >  
[...] < ... > bre

302 [...] < ... > er  
[...] < ... > fidh

303 [...] < ... > ucht  
[...]

Words noted in footnotes by Carney as being illegible should be read: q. 250, tabach; q. 256, d[...].r.