

THREE TRANSLATIONS



Michael Hartnett

ON THE DEATH OF TADHG Ó CRÓINÍN'S THREE CHILDREN
after Aodhagán Ó Rathaille

Rathmore gave a scream; shattered her looms,
her fortune was ruined. Sorrow's house did explode,
a total fog fell. I could not see the lawn.
To that lime-white place tears came with the news.

Destroyed by great force by the strongest of floods
her delft and her jewels, her wicker, her songs;
a swift spark jumped up to her forehead, that burned
her smooth richest quilts, her goblets of gold.

Gloom hurting and pangs that wound without cure;
great loss in the West, and a fever so black
caused a longing to weep, a heavy heart-spasm;
Eilín in the grave, and Diarmuid, and Tadhg.

Oh God, who did die, whom the blind way did wound,
to your holy house convey the trapped three;
grant richness of sense to their father, I pray,
so he can bow down before your sacred will.

Three perfect pearls, well-trained in their ways,
three sun-bright candles, three clever in deeds;
three corn-ears unbowed, and not old in years,
three stars without pride in words or in traits;

three strings that were sweet (three holes in the ground),
three saintly children who gave great love to Christ;
three mouths and three hearts, three fine bodies in graves,
three foreheads so bright where black beetles parade.

Three vines that were fair, three true doves so wise,
three apples so fine from a fresh royal branch;

these stewards of the house used no thrift to the poor,
three smooth faces, slim waists; they darken my heart.

Their loss it triples my loss and triples my grief,
the three mild and saintly, the perfume-skinned three
since the grave snatched away my three most refined
oh King direct them to your mansion most royal.

ON THE DEATH OF MURTY GRIFFIN, A VILLAIN HALF IRISH,
HALF FOREIGN, AND A SPOILER OF WOMEN IN CO. KERRY
after Aodhagán Ó Rathaille

Oh Death, you took Murty from us
 (and all think “not before time!”);
take Cronin too, as you’re at it—
 to part them now wouldn’t be right!
Forever, rough stone, pin down with zeal
the vagrant rake who despoiled the land;
in case he pops up out of hell again
press down on him tightly and crush his heart—
 his merciless, pitiless heart;
 a heathen who died a quick death,
Hell hasn’t pain enough for him—
 Murty so quick with the whip.
And now he is helpless and weak by the Styx
and thousands of women judge him from its banks;
under the gravestone beetles scrape his great prick,
by venomous demons and hell-hounds he’s damned.
All Hell’s devils in great haste
 coloured his phiz black as coal;
Peter slammed the door in his face,
 he went to the house of lost souls.
Since you enslaved our famous race
and turned your back on the clergy as well;
since you denied the king’s son by an oath,
you reptile of evil, I’m glad you’re in Hell!

Thick stone, in your pit is the thug who crossed Shannon’s water
the snake that collected mortgages of men who lost land and home;
a rotten upstart who seduced every poor man’s daughter,
whose clever lips mouthed oaths against the very Pope;

a corrupt steward who craftily plundered MacCarthy's lands
(the fine house of the hawk from the Laune came into his hands).
His Reward? Hell's damnation came his way
and a bare six feet of Killarney graveyard's clay!

O' SULLIVAN'S MALEDICTION
after Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin

Oh acute and honest poet who reads the old authors,
as you can solve quickly all difficult questions;
tell us out plain, after weighing your answers,
will the Irish belong in the power of the foreigners?

'Tis not fine recitation nor perusing old writers,
nor the speed of the light-footed warriors
will scatter the foreigners out of our country
but the power of the Lord when he justly destroys them.

Gibson, Brown, Townsend, Gibbs, Tonson and Gore,
Dixon, Knowles, Boulton, Bullen and Bowen;
Wrixon, Southwell, Moulton, Miller and Dore;
starvation and jail to what remains of their spawn.

Southwell, Steelman, Stephens, Stannard and Swain,
Furnell, Fleetwood, Reeve, Chapman and Lane;
every hangman, proud, swarthy and bald, of their race
in a battle of bullets may they be defeated and slain.

Lysaght, Leader, Clayton, Compton and Coote,
Ivers, Damer, Bateman, Bagwell and Brooks;
Ryder, Taylor, Maynard, Marrick and Moore—
may the strong tribes of Cashel undo all these boors.

Upton, Evans, Bevan, Bassett and Blair,
Burton, Beecher, Wheeler, Farren and Phair;
Turner, Yielding, Reeves and Waller and Deane—
Cromwell and his gang, may their herds be scattered astray.

Oh lovely God, oh Jesus, oh Father of the Lamb,
who sees us in fetters and severely in bonds;
King of Heaven, Protector, answer my song:
destroy, and dispel these lice from our land.