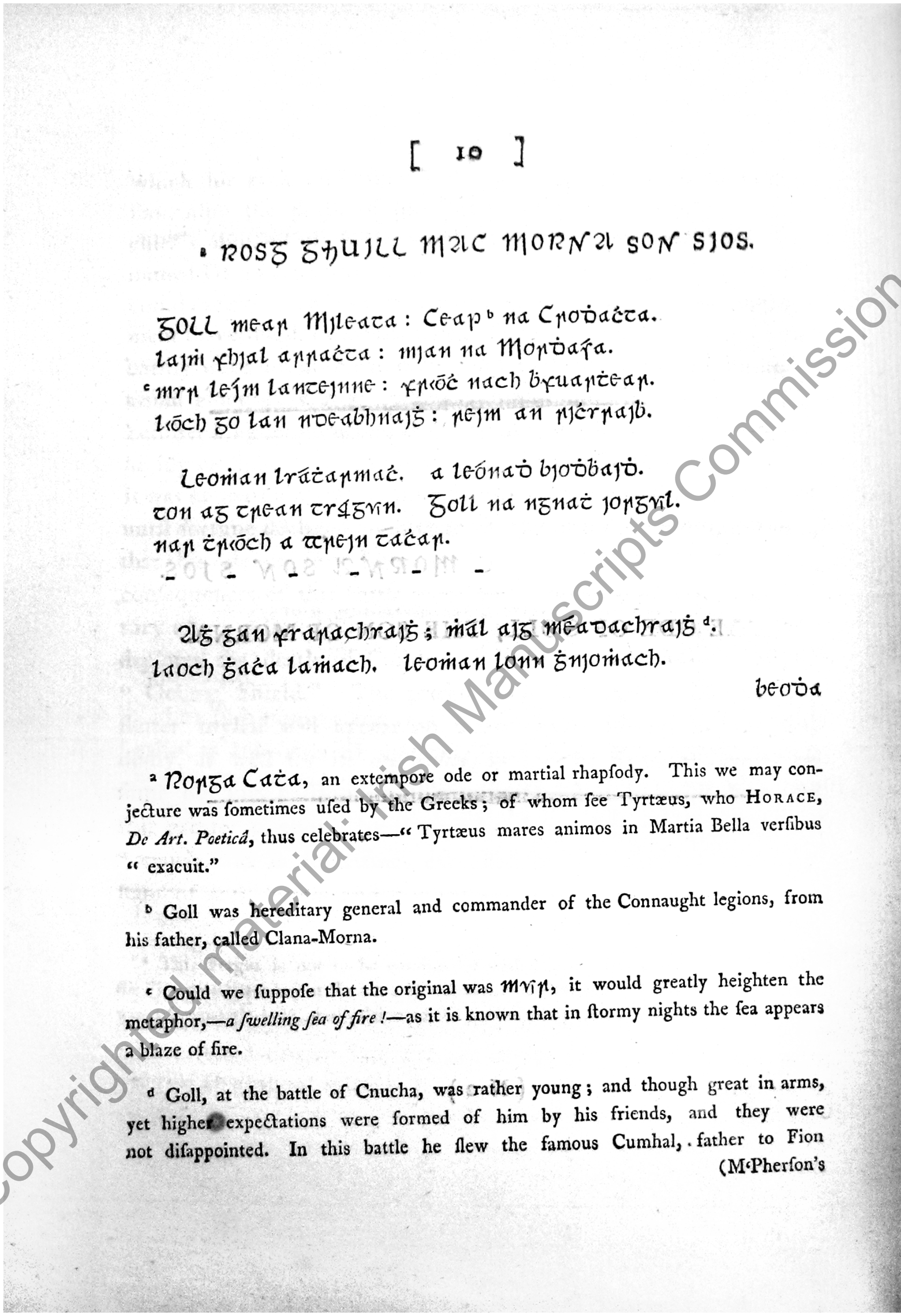
CHARLOTTE BROOKE'S
'RELIQUES OF IRISH POETRY'



[10]

[a] Rosg Ghuill mac Morna son sios.

Goll mear Mileata : Cear[b] na Croḋaċta.
Laim fhial arraċta : mian na Morḋaga.
[c] mur leim lainteinne : fróċ nach bfuarṫear.
Lóch go lan ndeabhnaiġ : reim an riċraib.

Leoman lraċarmaċ. a leónaḋ bioḋbaiḋ.
ton ag trean trᵹgnn. Goll na ngnaċ iorgail.
nar ṫróch a ttrein taċar.
- - - - - -

Aġ gan frarachraiġ; ṁal aig meadachraiġ [d].
laoch ġaċa laṁach. leoman lonn ġniomach.

beoḋa

[a] Rorga Caṫa, an extempore ode or martial rhapſody. This we may conjecture was ſometimes uſed by the Greeks; of whom ſee Tyrtæus, who HORACE, *De Art. Poeticâ*, thus celebrates—"Tyrtæus mares animos in Martia Bella verſibus "exacuit."

[b] Goll was hereditary general and commander of the Connaught legions, from his father, called Clana-Morna.

[c] Could we ſuppoſe that the original was muir, it would greatly heighten the metaphor,—*a ſwelling ſea of fire!*—as it is known that in ſtormy nights the ſea appears a blaze of fire.

[d] Goll, at the battle of Cnucha, was rather young; and though great in arms, yet higher expectations were formed of him by his friends, and they were not diſappointed. In this battle he ſlew the famous Cumhal, father to Fion

(M'Pherſon's

Sample of the Parker font from *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, Antiquities*, 1788, ii, p. 10. Stephen Parker was a Dublin-based typographer who made the early Gaelic typeface Parker, also known as the Brooke or Bonham font, possibly using a Muiris Ó Gormáin manuscript as exemplar.

CHARLOTTE BROOKE'S

Reliques of Irish Poetry

edited by

LESA NÍ MHUNGHAILE

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ENDPAPERS: The image used in the endpapers is a map of Cottage, Co. Longford, where Charlotte Brooke died in 1793 (TCD Map Library, shelf ref.: Papyrus case 5_018a_Longford).

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS IX
ABBREVIATIONS XI
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS XIII

Introduction XXI
Editorial Note XLIV

PART I

Charlotte Brooke's 'Reliques of Irish Poetry', 1789 edition

Note page numbers in this part refer to the pagination in the original edition

Preface I–X
List of subscribers XI–XXIII
Contents XXIV–XXVI

HEROIC POEMS
An introductory discourse to the poem of Conloch by Sylvester O'Halloran 3
Conloch 9
The lamentation of Cucullen over the body of his son Conloch 24
Magnus the Great 37
The Chase 73
Moira Borb 121

ODES
An introductory discourse to the War Ode 137
War Ode to Osgur, the son of Oisin… 151
Ode to Gaul, son of Morni 165
Ode, by Fitzgerald, written on his setting out on a voyage to Spain 181

ELEGIES
Elegy to the daughter of Owen 191
Elegy 200
Elegy 208
Elegy on the death of John Burke Carrentryle, Esq. 217
Elegy on the death of Carolan 225

SONGS
Thoughts on Irish song 229
Song for Gracey Nugent by Carolan 246
Song for Mable Kelly by Carolan 250
Song by Patrick Linden 255
The maid of the Valley 259

ORIGINAL GAELIC
Heroic Poems 265
Odes 296
Elegies 304
Songs 315

AN IRISH TALE 325
Mäon: an Irish tale 331

PART II

New Translations & Commentaries

HEROIC POEMS
Teacht Connlaoich go hÉirinn – The coming of Connlaoch to Ireland 5
Trúagh sin a Aoínfhear Aoife – Sad then, only son of Aoife 17
Láoidh Maghnuis Mhoir – The lay of Maghnus the Great 23
Laoigh na Sealga – The lay of the hunt 37
Láoidh an Mhoighre Bhoirb, sonn anos – The lay of Moighre Borb 57

ODES
Rosg Osguir mhic Oisin re hucht Chatha Gabhra – Ode to Oscar at the front of the Battle of Gabhra 68
Rosg Ghoill Mac Morna – Goll's battle cry 75
Muiris Mac Dáibidh Dhuibh Mac Gearalt CCT. – Muiris Mac Dáibhidh Dhuibh Mac Gearailt sung this 85

ELEGIES
O Gíaráin CCT. – O Gíaráin sung this 96
An droighneán donn – The brown blackthorn 106
Eamonn aChnuic – Edmund of the Hill 112
Marbhna Sheáin de Burc – Lament for John Burke of Carrentryle 119
Marbhna Chearbhalláin – Carolan's Elegy 127

SONGS
Graesí Nuinseann – Gracey Nugent 133
Máible Ní Cheallaigh – Mable Kelly 140
Inghean tais na mbánchíoch is áilne no laéige bfuacht – Gentle white-breasted maiden 148
Bean dubh an ghleanna – The dark-haired maid of the valley 151

AN IRISH TALE
Mäon: an Irish tale 157

INDEX 165

INTRODUCTION

The year 1789, with the publication of Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Irish poetry*, marked a new departure in transcultural co-operation between Protestant antiquarians and Catholic Gaelic scholars and scribes.[1] The work was the first major point of interaction between oral tradition in the Irish language and print culture in Ireland and it should be situated in the context of a Europe-wide phenomenon that involved the 'discovery' of popular culture by the upper classes and an associated interest in antiquarianism, at a time when traditional popular culture was seen to be in retreat.[2] It was also influenced by the Celtic Revival that began around the year 1750, a movement that saw English-speaking people of letters seeking inspiration in the mythology, history and literary treasures of the ancient Celts.[3] Furthermore, the work may be read as a reaction to James Macpherson's *Fragments of ancient poetry* (1760), *Fingal* (1762) and *Temora* (1763). It aimed to provide a definitive Irish response to the Ossianic controversy sparked by those works and, in doing so, reflected the eighteenth-century 'cult of sensibility' and contemporary antiquarian debates surrounding racial theory and oral tradition.[4]

In an Irish context, during the latter half of the eighteenth century interest in Gaelic antiquarian matters had become a fashionable pursuit amongst some wealthy Protestants in Ireland. This was due, in part, to a growing confidence in their dominant position, and as the receding indigenous culture seemed no longer a threat, they could afford to indulge themselves by showing an interest in it. Antiquarian investigation manifested itself in a number of forms including the study of manners, customs and dress; the collection of artefacts and objects such as antique coins; the description of ancient monuments and, as an increasing number of this élite class began to think of themselves as Irish, the collection, copying and translation of Gaelic

1 Charlotte Brooke, *Reliques of Irish poetry: consisting of heroic poems, odes, elegies, and songs, translated into English verse: with notes explanatory and historical; and the originals in the Irish character. To which is subjoined an Irish tale* (Dublin, 1789). Unless otherwise stated, all references throughout are to this edition.

2 This movement may also be regarded as a reaction to the Enlightenment's dismissal of tradition and emphasis on reason. See Peter Burke, *Popular culture in early modern Europe* (rev. edn., Aldershot, 1994), pp 3–22.

3 For a discussion of the Celtic Revival, see Edward Snyder, *The Celtic revival in English literature 1760–1800* (Gloucester, Mass., 1965).

4 James Macpherson, *Fragments of ancient poetry, collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and translated from the Galic or Erse language* (Edinburgh, 1760); idem, *Fingal. An ancient epic poem, in six books; together with several other poems, composed by Ossian, the son of Fingal; translated from the Gaelic language by James Macpherson* (London, 1761/62); idem, *Temora, an ancient epic poem, in eight books; together with several other poems, composed by Ossian, the son of Fingal; translated from the Gaelic language by James Macpherson* (London, 1763).

manuscripts. The eighteenth century witnessed the fabrication of an Irish identity within the Protestant community and some came to appreciate native Gaelic culture as one with which they could identify.[5] A number of scholars from both traditions shared the aspiration, one also expressed by Brooke in the preface to the *Reliques*, that the study of antiquarianism and history, areas where common ground could be found, would unite the various ethnic groupings in Ireland.[6]

Born of an Anglican father and a Methodist mother, Charlotte Brooke is somewhat of an enigma. Even her date of birth cannot be established with certainty.[7] Biographical information is derived primarily from Wilson's *Brookiana* (1804) and Aaron Crossly Seymour's 'Memoirs of Miss Brooke' adjoined to the second edition of the *Reliques* (Dublin, 1816).[8] The Protestant antiquarian Joseph Cooper Walker, a close friend of Charlotte, had gathered material from her correspondents for a biography but, due to illness and an untimely death, he never succeeded in completing his project. The exact nature of Seymour's connection with Charlotte is unclear, as is how he came to be her biographer. His 'Memoirs of Miss Brooke', which was 128 pages long and included a number of her personal letters, provides the most substantial contemporary account of Brooke. Seymour was careful in his choice of material, however, and excluded any of the correspondence containing matter that would cause offence to any of her correspondents still living. Unfortunately, Brooke's personal papers are no longer extant. They came into Seymour's possession after her death but it is impossible to ascertain what happened to them subsequently. It is most likely that

5 For a discussion of Anglo-Irish identity, see A.P.W. Malcomson, *John Foster. The politics of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy* (Oxford, 1978), pp xvii–xxiii; W.J. McCormack, *Ascendancy and tradition in Anglo-Irish literary history from 1789 to 1939* (Oxford, 1985), pp 61–96; R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600–1972* (London, 1989), pp 167–94; James Kelly, 'The genesis of "Protestant ascendancy": the Rightboy disturbances of the 1780s and their impact upon Protestant opinion' in Gerard O'Brien (ed.), *Parliament, politics and people. Essays in eighteenth century Irish history* (Dublin, 1989), pp 93–127; S.J. Connolly (ed.), *Political ideas in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000). See also, Colin Kidd, *British identities before nationalism: ethnicity and nationhood in the Atlantic world, 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1999), pp 146–81. Parallels may be drawn with the rise of Creole nationalism in South America towards the end of the eighteenth century, where a Creole identity had begun to emerge amongst the 'Españoles americanos', who appropriated the pre-Hispanic past of the Aztecs and Incas. For a discussion of Españoles americanos identity, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (2nd edn, London and New York, 1991), pp 47–65.

6 For a discussion of antiquarianism in eighteenth-century Ireland, see Clare O'Halloran, *Golden ages and barbarous nations. Antiquarian debate and cultural politics in Ireland, c.1750–1800* (Cork, 2004).

7 The Protestant Parochial Registers of Killinkere and Mullagh, the parish in which Charlotte was born, for the period 1761 to 1877 perished in a fire in the Public Records Office, Dublin, in 1922. According to Philip O'Connell there were several entries relating to members of the Brooke family. For example, on 3 May 1767, a Charlotte Brooke acted as sponsor at the baptism of William Hope Luther, son of John Luther of Mullagh. The Luthers, who lived beside the hill of Mullagh, were cousins of Henry Brooke. See Philip O'Connell, *The schools and scholars of Breiffne* (Dublin, 1942), p. 452 *n.* 32.

8 Charles Henry Wilson, *Brookiana* (2 vols, London, 1804). This work was written as a memoir of Henry Brooke by Wilson, a family friend and author of *Poems translated from the Irish Language into the English* (Dublin, 1782) and *Select Irish poems translated into English* (1792?). It is an extremely diffuse work with much extraneous matter and only a brief mention is made of Charlotte. Charlotte Brooke, *Reliques of Irish Poetry … To which is prefixed, a memoir of her life and writings, by Aaron Crossly-Seymour* (2nd edn., 2 vols, Dublin, 1816).

9 Henry Brooke, *The fool of quality or the history of Henry, Earl of Moreland* (4 vols, Dublin, 1765). The Christian name Charlotte may give a further clue to her date of birth as the name became fashionable after the marriage of King George III to Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburg-Strelitz in 1761. This would then suggest a date post-1761. If, however, the Charlotte Brooke who acted as sponsor at the baptism of William Hope Luther was the author of the *Reliques*, she must have been born prior to 1761.

they were either lost or destroyed. Some valuable letters did survive amongst the papers of her correspondents, however, notably those of Charles Vallancey and the English poet and biographer William Hayley. These letters, along with those published by Seymour, afford important insights into Charlotte's character in addition to the nature of her contact with other scholars and antiquarians.

Seymour failed to provide Charlotte's date of birth and since then there has been a discrepancy of some twenty years between the dates suggested by other biographers, with most commentators tending to place it somewhere between 1740 and 1750. Based on Charlotte's remark that she was still a child when the first edition of her father's work *The fool of quality* (Dublin, 1765) appeared and her reference to herself as 'the child of his old age', it is most likely that she was born sometime between 1750 and 1760.[9] Born in Rantavan House, her ancestral home, in the parish of Mullagh, close to the village of Virginia in Co. Cavan, she was the youngest child of Catherine Meares, and the playwright and political pamphleteer Henry Brooke (1703?–1783).[10] Charlotte was an extremely private person and little is known of her personality apart from Seymour's comments that 'she was modest and unobtrusive, and is described by her intimate friends as a person of a studious and retired character, whose life was a life of incessant reading and thought'.[11] Although she was physically frail and endured a difficult and tragic life – surviving her parents and siblings and dying herself at a young age – she was a spirited, intelligent and resilient woman who spoke her mind when she felt she had been treated unjustly.[12] This image is completely at odds with that of the weak helpless woman, often promoted by both Charlotte herself and her friends, who were possibly trying to humour her. The Methodist John Wesley remarked to his intimate friend and fellow Methodist Henry Brooke the painter, who was Charlotte's cousin, that she preferred to observe rather than to engage in conversation, at least with those not within her immediate family circle: 'I admired Miss Brooke for her silence; her look spake, though not her tongue. If we should live to meet again, I should be glad to *hear,* as well as see her'.[13]

Although her mother and paternal cousins had embraced Methodism, Charlotte herself remained attached to the Church of Ireland despite seeking advice on spiritual matters from her cousin Henry during the final months of her life. Particularly towards

10 For biographical information, see Richard Sinclare Brooke, *Dublin University Magazine* (Feb. 1852), pp 200–14; Charles Kingsley's preface to Henry Brooke, *The fool of quality: or, the history of Henry, Earl of Moreland* (new edn., 2 vols, London, 1859); Helen Scurr, *Henry Brooke* (Minneapolis, 1927) and Sean Finbarr Gallagher, 'The life and works of Henry Brooke (1707–73)' (Ph.D. thesis, University College, Dublin, 1966). Some accounts state that Charlotte was the youngest of nineteen children, while others mention 22. Scurr suggests that there were nine children in total. Confusion may have arisen as to the exact number of children because Henry and Catherine Brooke shared their household in Rantavan House with Henry's brother Robert, the painter, and his large family. Both families lived there until Henry was forced to sell the estate due to financial difficulties. See Scurr, *Henry Brooke*, p. 8.

11 Seymour, 'Memoirs of Miss Brooke', p. xiii.

12 This is evident from correspondence between Charlotte and Miss T—– in which she complained about her treatment at the hands of McKenzie, the College printer. Seymour, 'Memoirs of Miss Brooke', pp lxi-lxii.

13 Isaac D'Olier, *Memoir of Henry Brooke* (Dublin, 1816), p. 91.

the end of her life she became deeply religious and exhibited a tendency towards mysticism. Although she denied that she was a mystic, she was greatly influenced by the writings of Madam Guyon and the Rev. William Law, author of *A serious call to a devout and holy life* (London, 1729).[14] Seymour, a Methodist, clearly disapproved of her approbation of the mystic's writings: 'The writings of the late Rev. William Law, a celebrated mystic, were much admired by Miss Brooke. They are full of the grossest absurdities and most dangerous errors, yet cordially received, and held most sacred by many'.[15] Jane Walker, Joseph Cooper Walker's sister and a close friend, also shared Seymour's disapproval and noted once in a letter that she believed Charlotte had been too taken with the mystics: 'Charlotte Brooke was indeed a most amiable creature but I always thought she suffered her mind to dwell too much on the mysticks'.[16] Charlotte's father, Henry, remained an Anglican although Helen Scurr has demonstrated that his poem 'Universal Beauty' (1735) was informed both by mysticism and deism and she also argues that Methodistical elements may be discerned in his moralistic novel *The fool of quality*.[17]

Charlotte appears to have enjoyed a closer relationship with her father than with her mother. There is no mention of her mother in her private correspondence or the extent to which she was affected by her mother's death, despite Charlotte having nursed her through years of illness. In fact, it seems fair to state that Charlotte's life revolved around that of her father, even after his death. She appears to have been unable to assert herself as a separate individual but instead considered herself an extension of her father:

> While my Father survived, I lived but for his comfort, & now he is dead, I live but for his fame. Born in his latter years, I considered myself as born for him alone, – a purpose of which I am prouder than any other for which I could have been sent into the world.[18]

She reiterated this idea in a letter to her friend Miss T—– in a letter dated 15 May 1792:

> I have ever lived but for my father, and I shall not *now* divide my little rivulet from the parent stream. Oh, may we never be divided! – may we roll together to that sea

14 Jeanne-Marie Bouvier de la Motte-Guyon (1648–1717), the celebrated French Catholic mystic and one of the key advocates of Quietism, was author of *Moyen court et tres facile pour l'oraison* (Grenoble, 1685). A number of her other works were published posthumously and subsequently became popular among Protestants. Charlotte's cousin, Thomas Digby Brooke, translated a number of Guyon's works, including *A short and easy method of prayer*, which he published in London in 1775 together with the memoirs of her life. See Seymour, 'Memoirs of Miss Brooke', p. ix.

15 Seymour, 'Memoirs of Miss Brooke', p. cvii. Seymour was a Calvanist Methodist rather than a Wesleyan Methodist and wrote the official biography of the other founder of Methodism, George Whitefield.

16 N.L.I Report on Private Collections no. 389 (Fonthill Abbey) (2748). R.A. Walker, Fonthill Abbey, Rathfarnham. Unfortunately there is no context for this letter and it is unknown to whom it was addressed.

17 Scurr, *Henry Brooke*, p. 100. John Wesley produced an edition of *The fool of quality* in 1781, probably with the consent of the author, but introduced a number of changes in the process, abridging some parts and expanding others.

18 Letter to the English poet and biographer William Hayley, Bodleian Library, Ms. Eng. Lett. c.19, ff 11v-12r.

> "from whence we never have return!" In life, my soul is his; – in death I trust it shall join him! – You say I know not what it is to have the heart exclusively centered in one object – you forgot my father when you said so. I am indeed incapable of any other love – my heart was *intended* for that alone, and nature has not nor ever will have *room* for any other one. I see none on earth who resemble him, and therefore heaven alone can become his rival in my breast.[19]

The novelist Maria Edgeworth echoed similar sentiments a number of years later when, at thirty-seven years old, she stated that without her father she would 'sink into that nothing from which he has raised me'.[20] Indeed, there is anecdotal evidence that Brooke and Edgeworth were on friendly terms and parallels may be drawn between certain aspects of their lives. Both women were 'literary daughters' who received a 'male education' under their father's direction.[21] Henry Brooke, like Richard Lovell Edgeworth, was greatly influenced by Rousseau's writings on the subject of educating children, which placed emphasis on the principle of rousing the child's innate curiosity.[22] Apart from excelling in languages and translating, Charlotte also studied subjects such as astronomy and geography. This broad education set her apart from her female contemporaries and prepared her for her future role as a pioneer of Anglo-Irish literature.

It is particularly significant that she was raised in the ancient Gaelic area of Breiffne, the patrimony of the Uí Briúin, comprising areas of Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Fermanagh, Cavan, and Meath. This area was still a stronghold of the Irish language in Brooke's time and there is evidence that a strong Gaelic literary tradition still existed in her native parish of Mullagh at the beginning of the eighteenth century.[23] Exposed to this tradition from a young age, she once told Joseph Cooper Walker that as a child she remembered one of her father's labourers reading aloud from two manuscripts of Irish poetry to 'a rustic audience in her father's fields'.[24] Her father had developed an interest in the Irish language during his youth when a young man by the name of Dary or Mac Dary wrote some Irish verses in his honour. He later had a number of poems in Irish collected and translated for him by people in the locality.[25] This interest in the native culture was undoubtedly passed on to Charlotte but it is difficult to determine when exactly she began to learn Irish or to assess her level of

19 Seymour, 'Memoirs of Miss Brooke', p. lxii.

20 Cited by Marilyn Butler in *Maria Edgeworth: A literary biography* (Oxford, 1972), p. 207.

21 Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace argues that 'Literary daughters are special kinds of daughters, women who adapt themselves to both a familial and a literary hierarchy'. See Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their fathers' daughters. Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth and patriarchal complexity* (New York and Oxford, 1991), p. 11.

22 Edgeworth believed that education played a vital role in the betterment and advancement of society. His approach to education was based on the encouragement of ability rather than discipline and he was solely responsible for the education of his daughter Maria with whom he co-authored *Practical education* (2 vols, London, 1798), a manual for rearing children.

23 O'Connell, *Schools and scholars*, p. 373.

24 Joseph Cooper Walker, *Historical memoirs of the Irish bards. Interspersed with anecdotes of, and occasional observations on the music of Ireland* (Dublin and London, 1786), p. 41 *n.*

25 Wilson, *Brookiana*, p. 86.

proficiency. According to Seymour, she learned the language within two years with only the assistance of books.[26] Given the dearth of grammatical works that would have been available to her at the time, it is unlikely, however, that this was her only means of instruction. In many cases children of the gentry would have heard Irish spoken amongst the domestic staff and would, in turn, have learned Irish from them. Indeed, in order to undertake such a daunting task as the *Reliques* an excellent command of the Irish language would have been necessary. This raises questions as to how competent she really was in dealing with Irish language manuscript material and the degree of assistance she received. It is impossible to establish the methodology she employed when translating the poems or indeed whether she had any Irish language manuscripts in her possession. The scribe Muiris Ó Gormáin, for example, provided her with copies of poems taken from the numerous manuscripts he owned rather than giving her the original manuscripts, but it is impossible to say whether she was supplied with literal translations from which she subsequently produced her translations or whether she translated directly from the copies herself. Joseph Cooper Walker claimed in a note to the text of *Laoidh na Seilge*, published in his *Historical memoirs*, that he had a literal translation of the text, completed by Theophilus O'Flanagan, in front of him, and proceed to give an account of the lay based on O'Flanagan's translation. It is not unreasonable to suggest, therefore, that O'Flanagan provide Charlotte with the same assistance.[27]

The *Reliques* was Charlotte's second venture into print. Three years previously her translations of two of Carolan's songs, 'Carolan's receipt', which was printed in paraphrase form in a footnote, and 'Carolan's monody on the death of Mary Mac Guire' appeared in Walker's *Historical memoirs.* Also included was a translation of the song 'Tiagharna Mhaigh-Eo'.[28] She preferred to remain anonymous in the work and was only referred to as 'a lady'. Her deep faith and philanthropic nature is reflected in her third publication, *The school for Christians, in dialogues, for the use of children* (Dublin, 1791), a book of moral and religious instruction for children. This work consisted of a series of dialogues between a father and his child and is most likely based on her own conversations with her father as a child. According to Seymour, she founded a charity school in Co. Longford with the proceeds from this book.[29] It appears from the list of subscribers to the work and the number of copies they

26 Only a limited selection existed at that time and consisted of works such as Hugh Mac Curtin's *The elements of the Irish language* (Lovain, 1728) and Charles Vallancey's *A grammar of the Iberno-Celtic, or Irish language* (Dublin, 1773). See also R.A. Breathnach, 'Two eighteenth-century Irish scholars: J.C. Walker and Charlotte Brooke' in *Studia Hibernica*, v (1965), p. 93.

27 Walker, *Historical memoirs*, p. 57 *n.* (appendix).

28 Walker, *Historical memoirs*, pp 86–7; 94–5; 103–6 (appendix).

29 Her intentions may not have been altogether altruistic, however, as there is evidence that she engaged in some proselytising work at least amongst her own domestic staff. Seymour tells of a young Roman Catholic girl whom Brooke had taken in as a waiting-girl on the death of the girl's father. Brooke 'treated her in every respect, so as to make her feel her situation as unlike a dependent as possible'. The girl subsequently voluntarily converted to Protestantism. See Seymour, 'Memoirs of Miss Brooke', p. lxxvi.

PART I

CHARLOTTE BROOKE'S

Reliques of Irish Poetry

PUBLISHED DUBLIN 1789

RELIQUES
OF
IRISH POETRY:

CONSISTING OF

HEROIC POEMS, ODES, ELEGIES, AND SONGS,

TRANSLATED INTO

ENGLISH VERSE:

WITH

NOTES EXPLANATORY AND HISTORICAL;

AND THE

ORIGINALS IN THE IRISH CHARACTER.

TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED

AN IRISH TALE.

BY MISS BROOKE.

A Oiſin, aſ biñ liñ do ſgeala.
Caċ Gaḃra.

GEORGE BONHAM, PRINTER,
SOUTH GREAT GEORGE'S-STREET, DUBLIN.

M.DCC.LXXXIX.

PREFACE.

IN a preface to a tranſlation of ancient Iriſh poetry, the reader will naturally expect to ſee the ſubject elucidated and enlarged upon, with the pen of learning and antiquity. I lament that the limited circle of my knowledge does not include the power of anſwering ſo juſt an expectation; but my regret at this circumſtance is conſiderably leſſened, when I reflect, that had I been poſſeſſed of all the learning requiſite for ſuch an undertaking, it would only have qualified me for an unneceſſary foil to the names of O'CONOR, O'HALLORAN and VALLANCEY.

MY comparatively feeble hand aſpires only (like the ladies of ancient Rome) to ſtrew flowers in the paths of theſe laureled champions of my country. The flowers of earth, the *terreſtrial* offspring of Phœbus, were ſcattered before the ſteps of victorious WAR; but, for triumphant GENIUS are reſerved the *cæleſtial* children of his beams, the unfading flowers of the Muſe. To pluck, and thus to beſtow them, is mine, and I hold myſelf honoured in the taſk.

" THE eſteem (ſays Mr. O'HALLORAN) which mankind con-
" ceive of nations in general, is always in proportion to the
" figure they have made in arts and in arms. It is on this
" account that all civilized countries are eager to diſplay their
" heroes, legiſlators, poets and philoſophers—and with juſtice,
" ſince every individual participates in the glory of his illuſtri-
" ous countrymen."—But where, alas, is this thirſt for national glory? when a ſubject of ſuch importance is permitted to a pen like mine! Why does not ſome *ſon of Anak* in genius ſtep forward, and boldly throw his gauntlet to Prejudice, the avowed and approved champion of his country's lovely muſe?

IT is impoſſible for imagination to conceive too highly of the pitch of excellence to which a ſcience muſt have ſoared which was cheriſhed with ſuch enthuſiaſtic regard and cultivation as that of poetry, in this country. It was abſolutely, for ages, the vital ſoul of the nation *; and ſhall we then have no curioſity reſpecting the productions of genius once ſo celebrated, and ſo prized?

TRUE it is, indeed, and much to be lamented, that few of the compoſitions of thoſe ages that were famed, in Iriſh annals, for the *light of ſong*, are now to be obtained by the moſt diligent reſearch. The greater number of the poetical remains of our Bards, yet extant, were written during the middle ages; periods when the genius of Ireland was in its wane,

* See the elegant and faithful O'CONOR upon this ſubject; (*Diſſertations on the Hiſtory of Ireland*, p. 66.) and he is ſupported by the teſtimonies of the moſt authentic of antient and modern hiſtorians.

" —— Yet

" ———— Yet ſtill, not loſt
" All its original brightneſs————."

On the contrary, many of the productions of thoſe times breathe the true ſpirit of poetry, beſides the merit they poſſeſs with the Hiſtorian and Antiquary, as ſo many faithful delineations of the manners and ideas of the periods in which they were compoſed.

With a view to throw ſome light on the antiquities of this country, to vindicate, in part, its hiſtory, and prove its claim to ſcientific as well as to military fame, I have been induced to undertake the following work. Beſides the four different ſpecies of compoſition which it contains, (the Heroic Poem, the Ode, the Elegy, and the Song) others yet remain unattempted by tranſlation :—the Romance, in particular, which unites the fire of Homer with the enchanting wildneſs of Arioſto. But the limits of my preſent plan have neceſſarily excluded many beautiful productions of genius, as little more can be done, within the compaſs of a ſingle volume, than merely to give a few ſpecimens, in the hope of awakening a juſt and uſeful curioſity, on the ſubject of our poetical compoſitions.

Unacquainted with the rules of tranſlation, I know not how far thoſe rules may cenſure, or acquit me. I do not profeſs to give a merely literal verſion of my originals, for that I ſhould have found an impoſſible undertaking.—Beſides the ſpirit which they breathe, and which lifts the imagination far above the tameneſs, let me ſay, the *injuſtice*, of ſuch a taſk,—there are many complex words that could not be tranſlated literally, without

out great injury to the original,—without being " falſe to its " ſenſe, and falſer to its fame."

I AM aware that in the following poems there will ſometimes be found a ſameneſs, and repetition of thought, appearing but too plainly in the Engliſh verſion, though ſcarcely perceivable in the original Iriſh, ſo great is the variety as well as beauty peculiar to that language. The number of ſynonima * in which it abounds, enables it, perhaps beyond any other, to repeat the ſame thought, without tiring the fancy or the ear.

IT is really aſtoniſhing of what various and comprehenſive powers this neglected language is poſſeſſed. In the pathetic, it breathes the moſt beautiful and affecting ſimplicity; and in the bolder ſpecies of compoſition, it is diſtinguiſhed by a force of expreſſion, a ſublime dignity, and rapid energy, which it is ſcarcely poſſible for any tranſlation fully to convey; as it ſometimes fills the mind with ideas altogether new, and which, perhaps, no modern language is entirely prepared to expreſs. One compound epithet muſt often be tranſlated by two lines of Engliſh verſe, and, on ſuch occaſions, much of the beauty is neceſſarily loſt; the force and effect of the thought being weakened by too ſlow an introduction on the mind; juſt as that light which dazzles, when flaſhing ſwiftly on the eye, will be gazed at with indifference, if let in by degrees.

BUT, though I am conſcious of having, in many inſtances, failed in my attempts to do all the juſtice I wiſhed to my origi-

* There are upwards of forty names to expreſs a *Ship* in the Iriſh language, and nearly an equal number for a *Houſe*, &c.

nals,

nals, yet ſtill, ſome of their beauties are, I hope, preſerved; and I truſt I am doing an acceptable ſervice to my country, while I endeavour to reſcue from oblivion a few of the invaluable reliques of her ancient genius; and while I put it in the power of the public to form ſome idea of them, by clothing the thoughts of our Iriſh muſe in a language with which they are familiar, at the ſame time that I give the originals, as vouchers for the fidelity of my tranſlation, as far as two idioms ſo widely different would allow.

However deficient in the powers requiſite to ſo important a taſk, I may yet be permitted to point out ſome of the good conſequences which might reſult from it, if it were but performed to my wiſhes. The productions of our Iriſh Bards exhibit a glow of cultivated genius,—a ſpirit of elevated heroiſm,—ſentiments of pure honor,—inſtances of diſintereſted patriotiſm,—and manners of a degree of refinement, totally aſtoniſhing, at a period when the reſt of Europe was nearly ſunk in barbariſm: And is not all this very honorable to our countrymen? Will they not be benefited,—will they not be gratified, at the luſtre reflected on them by anceſtors ſo very different from what modern prejudice has been ſtudious to repreſent them? But this is not all.——

As yet, we are too little known to our noble neighbour of Britain; were we better acquainted, we ſhould be better friends. The Britiſh muſe is not yet informed that ſhe has an elder ſiſter in this iſle; let us then introduce them to each other! together let them walk abroad from their bowers, ſweet ambaſſadreſſes of cordial union between two countries that ſeem formed by nature to

to be joined by every bond of intereſt, and of amity. Let them entreat of Britain to cultivate a nearer acquaintance with her neighbouring iſle. Let them conciliate for us her eſteem, and her affection will follow of courſe. Let them tell her, that the portion of her blood which flows in our veins is rather ennobled than diſgraced by the mingling tides that deſcended from our heroic anceſtors. Let them come—but will they anſwer to a voice like mine? Will they not rather depute ſome favoured pen, to chide me back to the ſhade whence I have been allured, and where, perhaps, I ought to have remained, in reſpect to the memory, and ſuperior genius of a Father—it avails not to ſay how dear!—But my feeble efforts preſume not to emulate,—and they cannot injure his fame.

To guard againſt criticiſm I am no way prepared, nor do I ſuppoſe I ſhall eſcape it; nay, indeed, I do not wiſh to eſcape the pen of the *candid* critic: And I would willingly believe that an individual capable of no offence, and pretending to no pre-eminence, cannot poſſibly meet with any ſeverity of criticiſm, but what the miſtakes, or the deficiencies of this performance, may be juſtly deemed to merit; and what, indeed, could ſcarcely be avoided by one unſkilled in compoſition, and now, with extreme diffidence, preſenting, for the firſt time, her literary face to the world.

It yet remains to ſay a few words relative to the Tale which is annexed to this volume: for that I had no original; the ſtory, however, is not my own; it is taken from a revolution in the hiſtory of ancient Ireland, Anno Mundi 3649. And no where will

will the Muſe be furniſhed with nobler ſubjects than that neglected hiſtory affords. The whole reign of CEALLACHAIN is one continued ſeries of heroiſm, and high-wrought honor, that riſes ſuperior to all the flight of Romance, and defies Poetic fable to ſurpaſs it. Alſo, the reign of BRIAN BOIROIMH, and the famous retreat of the glorious tribe of DALGAIS; beſides many other inſtances too numerous for detail; amongſt which I ſelected the ſtory of MAON, as a ſubject more ſuited to my limited powers, than thoſe which demand a "Muſe of fire," to record them.

I CANNOT conclude this preface without the gratification of acknowledging the favours with which I have been honored, ſince the commencement of my work.

FROM the judgment and taſte of DOMINICK TRANT, Eſq; (a gentleman too well known to need my panegyric) I have received much information and aſſiſtance.

To the Right Honorable the Counteſs of MOIRA I am indebted for ſome valuable communications; as alſo to the learned WILLIAM BEAUFORD, Eſq; of Athy; to RALPH OUSLEY, Eſq; of Limerick; and to THEOPHILUS O'FLANAGAN, Eſq; of Trinity College, Dublin.

To the learning and public ſpirit of SYLVESTER O'HALLORAN, Eſq; I owe innumerable obligations; and JOSEPH C. WALKER, Eſq; has afforded every aſſiſtance which zeal, judgment, and extenſive knowledge, could give.

BESIDES the literary favours of my friends, there are others which I cannot omit to acknowledge, as they equally tend to evince their wiſhes for the ſucceſs of this undertaking.

THE accompliſhed family of CASTLE-BROWNE, in the county of Kildare, have exerted all the influence of taſte, and character, to extend the ſubſcription to this work. The learned author of the HISTORICAL MEMOIRS OF THE IRISH BARDS, and his brother, SAMUEL WALKER, Eſq; late of Trinity College, Dublin, have alſo been equally zealous and ſucceſsful; and to theſe two families I am indebted for the greater number of my ſubſcribers, in this kingdom. For the reſt, I am obliged to the influence of the Honorable Juſtice HELLEN; DOMINICK TRANT, Eſq; RICHARD GRIFFITH, Eſq; the Reverend EDWARD RYAN, D. D. the Reverend T. B. MEARES, and ſeveral other friends.

AMONGST thoſe of our ſiſter country who have exerted themſelves to promote the ſucceſs of this work, the liberal ſpirit of WILLIAM HAYLEY, Eſq; has been moſt particularly active. From the height of his own pre-eminence in literary fame, he is ever ready to reach, unaſked, the voluntary hand to thoſe who come to pay their vows at the ſhrine of his favourite Muſe. I have alſo the ſame obligations to the Reverend Doctor WARNER, the ſon of him whoſe hiſtorical juſtice, ſuperior to modern prejudices, ſo generouſly aſſerted the dignity and character of Ireland, in a work which muſt ever reflect the higheſt honor on the candour, and philanthropy, as well as the abilities of its author.

[*The*

[*The Publication of this Work has been delayed ſome Time, for the purpoſe of being enabled to give the following Liſt complete;—ſtill there are ſeveral Subſcribers whoſe Names are not yet come to hand, and the Liſt is therefore neceſſarily, though reluctantly, printed without them.*]

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