

VARIA IV: MAOL MHUIRE Ó HUIGINN'S POEM
SLÁN UAIM DON DÁ AOGHAIRE

The short poem *Slán uaim don dá aoghaire* (5 qq.) survives in the Book of the O'Conor Don, fol. 25v, with an ascription to Maol Mhuire Ó hUiginn OFM (d. 1590), archbishop of Tuam from 1586 and brother of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (d. 1591). It was printed from there and from two other seventeenth-century copies, both anonymous, by T. F. O'Rahilly.¹ The poem is addressed to the two pastors who had the initial R, *Slán uaim don dá aoghaire / 'gá bhfuil an .R. 'na dtosach*. The names were not spelt out to avoid putting them in danger, as Dr Marc Caball observes, but neither O'Rahilly nor any more recent scholar has identified the persons referred to.² Their names are revealed by Dr John Lynch in his work *De praesulibus Hiberniae*, whose biography of Archbishop Maol Mhuire says: *politis Hibernicis versibus ad Raymundum O Galchuir Dorensem et Richardum Macbradaigh Kilmorensem episcopum missis, desiderium quo patriae adeundae ardebat expressit; quos elegiae latinae vir nobilis Rogerus O Flaherti accurate mandavit* ('the longing with which he burned to return home he expressed in polished Irish verses, sent to Réamonn Ó Gallchobhair and Risteard Mac Brádaigh, the bishops of Derry and Kilmore, which that gentleman Roger O'Flaherty perfectly rendered in Latin elegiacs').³ Lynch's editor gives no sign of knowing that the poem survives, and I have been unable to trace the Latin version composed a little before 1672 by Ruaidhrí Ó Flaithbheartaigh. Maol Mhuire was probably writing from Antwerp in the Spanish Netherlands, where Lynch says that he spent his time as archbishop. The two pastors were evidently both bishops, Réamonn Ó Gallchobhair (1521-1601), bishop of Derry 1569-

¹ Thomas F. O'Rahilly, *Measgra dánta* (Cork 1927) II, 143-4 (no. 53). The other copies, RIA MS 23 F. 16 (cat. 2), Book of Ó Gadhra, p. 191, and RIA MS 23 D. 4 (cat. 5), p. 136, were both described by O'Rahilly himself in the first stage of the RIA catalogue at the same time as he was selecting material for this anthology.

² Marc Caball, *Poets and politics: continuity and reaction in Irish poetry, 1558-1625* (Cork 1998) 80; Katherine Simms, 'The selection of poems for inclusion in the Book of the O'Conor Don', in *The Book of the O'Conor Don: Essays on an Irish manuscript*, ed. P. Ó Macháin (Dublin 2010) 32-60 (at p. 44), refers to 'two clerics, R and R'.

³ John Lynch, *De praesulibus Hiberniae* (1672), fol. 925, edited by J. F. O'Doherty (Dublin 1944) II, 244.

1601, and Risteard Mac Brádaigh OFM (d. 1607), bishop of Kilmore 1580-1607. In the 1580s these were the only two Catholic bishops in Ireland with the initial R.⁴ Richard Creagh, archbishop of Armagh, was a prisoner in the Tower of London from 1575 until his death in 1588, so he cannot be counted as a third. The definite article was not used carelessly.

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⁴ Colm Lennon, *An Irish prisoner of conscience of the Tudor era: Archbishop Richard Creagh of Armagh, 1523-1586* (Dublin 2000) 128, dates his death after 30 November 1586 and before a successor was nominated in July 1587. In his article in *Dictionary of Irish biography* (2009) he refers to a record of his burial on 28 January 1587/8.