

## The Mothers' Lament at the Slaughter of the Innocents

middle irish with supplemental english translation

Is ann sin atbert aroli ben oc tarramta  
maic asa hucht don fhéoldénmaid:

‘Cid ima n-delige mo mac grádach frim,  
torad mo brónd?

Mé ro thusim,  
mo chích ros-ib,  
Mo brú ros-imorchair,  
m’inne mo shuig,  
Mo chride ro shás,  
Mo betha robé,  
mo bás a breth úaimm.  
Mo nest do thráig,  
M’indisce ro shocht,  
Mo shúile ro dall.’

And sin atbert aroli ben:

‘Mo mac beri úaim,  
Ní mé dogní int olcc. Marb didiu mé féin,  
ná marb no mac.  
Mo chícche cen loimm, mo shúli co fliuch,  
mo láma for crith, mo chorpán cen nith.  
Mo chéili cen mac, mé féini cen nirt.  
Mo betha is fíu bás,  
Uch m’oenimac, a Dé.  
M’oite cen lúach,  
Mo galar cen gein,  
Cen digail co bráth.  
Mo chícche ‘na tast,  
Mo chride ro chrom.’

Then, as she plucked her son from her  
breast for the executioner, one of the  
women said:

‘Why do you tear from me my darling son,  
the fruit of my womb?

It was I who bore him,  
he drank my breast.  
My womb carried him about,  
he sucked my vitals.  
He filled my heart:  
He was my life,  
'tis death to have him taken from me.  
My strength has ebbed,  
My voice is stopped,  
My eyes are blinded.’

Then another woman said:

‘It is my son you take from me.  
I did not do the evil, but kill me — me: don’t  
kill my son!  
My breasts are sapless, my eyes are wet, my  
hands shake, my poor body totters.  
My husband has no son,  
And I no strength;  
My life is worth — Death.  
Oh, my one son, my God!  
His foster-father has lost his hire.  
My birthless sickness no requital until doom.  
My breasts are silent,  
My heart is wrung.’

Is ann sin atbert aroli ben:  
'Oen sírthi día marbad,  
Sochaide marbthái.  
Nóidin búalti, na haithreacha gontai,  
na máithreacha marbthai.  
Iffern ro linsib, nem ro dúnsib.  
Fola fíren ro doritsibar cen chinaid.'

Is ann sin atbert aroli ben:  
'Tair chucam, a Críst!  
Ber m'anmain collúath mar oen is mo mac.  
Uch, a Muire mór, Máthair maic dé!  
Cid dogén cen mac?  
'Tret' mac-su ro marbatha mo chonn is mo  
chíall.  
Dorigine ben boeth dim I n-dáid mo maic.  
Mo chride is coep chró, A haithle in air  
trúaig  
Óndiú co tí bráth.

Then said another woman:  
'Ye are seeking to kill one;  
ye are killing many.  
Infants ye slay, fathers ye wound;  
you kill the mothers.  
Hell with your deed is full, heaven shut.  
Ye have spilt the blood of guiltless innocents.'

And yet another woman said:  
'O Christ, come to me!  
With my son take my soul quickly:  
O Great Mary, Mother of the Son of God,  
What shall I do without my son?  
For Thy Son, my spirit and my sense are  
killed.  
I am become a crazy woman for my son.  
After the piteous slaughter, my heart's a clot  
of blood  
From this day till Doom comes.'

notes:

line breaks are editorial and to be disregarded

as far as I am aware, this is the first reproduction of the middle irish in a scannable text format.

please forgive any errors, it was a great endeavor of textual research

Anecdota from Irish MSS' (III), ed. Kuno Meyer, The Gaelic Journal 4, no. 38 (May 1891), 90.