

SOME AUGUSTINIAN MATERIAL IN IRISH

I. A BARDIC POEM ON ST. AUGUSTINE

The poem reprinted below is a lengthy poem in praise of St. Augustine written in Irish sometime before the middle of the seventeenth century. The Irish text was edited by Fr. Lambert McKenna S.J. and published without translation or commentary in 1938 in a collection entitled *Dioghluim Dána*.¹

The poem itself is an example of a major genre in Irish literature, now termed in English 'bardic' poetry. This comprises 'the writings of poets trained in the Bardic Schools as they existed in Ireland and the Gaelic parts of Scotland down to about the middle of the seventeenth century...'.²

Those writers wrote formal, so to speak 'school' poetry, composed according to very elaborate rules. These rules governed number and distribution of syllables, rhyme, and complicated patterns of assonance and alliteration between selected groups of vowels and consonants in a wide variety of highly complex metres. It has been stated that these Irish metres arose originally under the influence of Latin hymn poetry of the fifth and sixth centuries.³

This highly elaborate court poetry was produced by professional poets. Such a professional poet, at the summit of his profession, was 'a professor of literature and a man of letters, highly trained in the use of a polished literary medium, belonging to a hereditary caste in an aristocratic society, holding an official position therein by virtue of his training, his learning, his knowledge of the history and tradition of his country, and his clan...'.⁴ There were different grades of poets, and there must have been many amateurs. By the early seventeenth century, when the Gaelic order

¹ *Dioghluim Dána*, (Dublin, 1938), pp. 176-180, 451. Fr. McKenna had first published his edition of the poem in *The Irish Monthly* (1930), pp. 186-187, where he also published the translation reprinted here. Text and translation are quoted by kind permission of An Gúm and the Provincial of the Irish Province of the Society of Jesus.

² Osborn Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry* (edited by David Greene and Fergus Kelly) (Dublin, 1970), p.3.

³ Eleanor Knott, *Irish Syllabic Poetry 1200 - 1600*, second edition (Dublin, 1974), p.5; Kuno Meyer, *A Primer of Irish Metrics* (Dublin, 1909), p.5.

⁴ Bergin, cit.n. 2 above, p.4.

was being overthrown, there were amateurs writing such poetry, perhaps people who had attended schools maintained by members of the bardic families, and who had there learned some basic skills in this poetry.

It is very difficult to date a piece of bardic poetry or identify where it was written because of the strict conventions and rules of expression practised by the professional poets. Poets trained in bardic schools wrote in difficult, polished, standardised, literary Irish. This resulted in virtual uniformity of expression in the poetry over a five hundred year period throughout the entire *Gaeltacht* or Irish speaking area, from the South of Ireland to the North of Scotland. There is a great quantity of such bardic verse, and a significant part of it is religious in theme. Unfortunately, however, no serious attempt has yet been made at any systematic study of it.

The MS from which the poem was edited, TCD H.3.19 (MS 1340) dates to the first part of the 17th century.⁵ The TCD catalogue states that the MS itself was written by Brian, son of Torlogh, (sic) Fitzpatrick, seemingly to be identified as Brian (mac Toirdhealbhagh) Mac Giolla Phádraig, the Vicar General of the Diocese of Ossory who was put to death about 1652. This ascription of the MS has been questioned however by the editor of Mac Giolla Phádraig's poems.⁶ The poem is also found in an eighteenth century MS, now MS G447 in the National Library, Dublin. Although here it is ascribed to Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn, Fr. Lambert McKenna considered this unlikely.⁷

One might speculate from the content that this devotional poem was written by an Augustinian observant friar who had trained in a bardic school, and that it dates from the later 15th or the 16th century.

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| <p>1 Toghaim Aibhisdin mar aighne,
A ghrádh riamh [go roibh] im chionn;
Fóireadh bláth na heagna m'éigean;
Fát eagla nár léigeadh liom.</p> | <p>1. I choose Augustine as pleader;
may he refute the charges against me
may the flower of wisdom help my stress
may he let no danger near me.</p> |
| <p>2 Minic thugas do thaoibh gníomha
An ghlóir thall-gá truaighe as mhó?-
mar chunnradh do chionn an pheacaidh;
cungnamh liom is deacair dhó.</p> | <p>2. Often by my deeds, alas!
I gave up Heavenly glory
in exchange for sin;
'twill be hard for him to save me.</p> |

⁵ Abbot and Gwynn, *T.C.D. cat. Ir. MSS*, pp. 161-164.

⁶ See Cuthbert Mháig Craith ed.: 'Brian Mac Giolla Phádraig' in *Celtica* 4 (1958), pp. 103-205, esp. p.103. A new catalogue of the Irish MSS in Trinity College Dublin, in preparation, may clarify these matters when published.

⁷ Nessa Ní Shéaghda, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the National Library of Ireland*, Fasc. X (Dublin, 1987), p.25; and Lambert McKenna. S.J. (ed.) *Philip Bocht Ó hUiginn*, (Dublin 1931), p.ix, n.1.

- 3 Aighne géar nach géabha ar leithsgéal
lá an bháis re breitheamh na sluagh
do fhreagra an aighne nír fhoráil
faighdhe eagna d'fhagháil [uadh].
- 4 Gá léaghadh re linn an chunntais
cairt mo locht an lá fa mbia
námhaid mh'anman d'fhagháil masla
faghbhadh d'anáir dhamhsa [ó Dhia].
- 5 Naisgeadh Aibhisdin ar Íosa,
ós éigean damh dul fa a chuing,
a gabháil tar cheann mo cheana
leam i n-anáir beara an bhuinn.
- 6 Fear do ba teo teagasc briathar,
béal milis leis nar mhian sgur
a diamhair do bhean don bhochta;
fear fiadhaigh dar dhocra dul
- 7 Munacha fa máthair thorrtach
toirrcheas uasal is eadh rug;
a cré féin gur ghabh a glanadh
léir dhamh ar an taradh thug.
- 8 A ndéanadh do cheilt a crábhaidh
ar a clú do chuireadh brat;
a gnaoi ní bhíodh acht ga báthadh;
do bhaoi a dhíol máthar ga mac.
- 9 A héanmhac i n-aghaidh creidimh
re chlódh ón bhás do bhí i ngioll;
a bheart cháis do b'adhbhar urchra
damhnadh báis cumtha 'n-a chionn.
- 10 Sé dá lorg do lean a mháthair
a mac dhí gér dhiúlt a toil;
do [char] a riaghail chruaidh chrábhaidh
do-chuaidh d'iarraidh áraigh air.
- 11 Nír bh'iongnadh dar dhoirt do dheoraibh
d'éiric braighe do bhuain a glas
- a chur ar céill gér chás deacair-
a grás do bhéin fheacaidh as.
- 12 Salm darab tosach Té Deum
dealbhthar an lá-sain leo ar-aon;
do Mhac Dé ar ndéinimh an mholta
do réidhigh sé rompa an raon.
3. I must beg wisdom of him
to answer the keen pleader
who will not accept my excuses
before the world's Judge at death.
4. When the paper of my sins
is read at Judgment, may he get
from God, as a favour for me
the confounding of my foe.
5. May Augustine force Christ
-for I must yield to Him!-
to take my part spite of my sin
for the sake of His pierced foot.
6. Man most zealous for the Word;
sweet lip ever eager to speak;
hunter hard to escape from,
he revealed the secret of poverty.
7. Monica was his mother;
noble the son she bore;
that her soil was purified
is clear by the fruit it gave.
8. Her hiding of her goodness
cloaked her fame;
her glory was ever concealed;
her son had mother worthy of him
9. Her only son, an unbeliever,
needed to be turned from death
a death of doom fated for him,
his peril caused her woe.
10. His mother kept pursuing him
though he rejected her desire;
she loved her stern austerity,
and strove to bind him.
11. Not strange that by her tears,
shed as price of freeing a captive
her goodness swayed him,
tho' to bring him to reason was hard.
12. The psalm Te Deum
is composed by them
praising God's Son;
He smoothed the path before them.

- 13 Oidhre Pádraig na bpeann solas
i saidhbheas cáich nír chuir sbéis;
a mhéad do las fa leanbh Moire
searbh gach blas oile dá éis.
- 14 Mar théid an fuacht [tig an] teasbhach;
táinig as gur ard [a] nós
- do bhí a bladhd gan dlaoi fa dheireadh
gnaoi da ghabh teimheal ar dtós.
- 15 A fhad gur iompuigh re creidimh
Ar an gcrábhaidh do chuir bail
feirde an bláth do bhaoi ar a naomhdhacht;
"ní gnáth saoi gan aonloch air."
- 16 Diúltadh na ngrás gur ghabh baisde
nochar bhean de dul 'n-a theach;
do-rinne síoth Dé 'n-a dheaghaidh;
an críoch is lé bearair breath
- 17 Do bhaoi - nochar bheag an toice -
mar thug druim re déanamh locht
Gach méin do budh maith 'n-a mháthair
's a mhaith féin san bhráthair bhocht.
- 18 A Íosa, gárbh usa a chobhair
an céidfhear rer chuiris dlús;
críoch mo ré ná rabh it aghaidh,
do ghabh mé tharaibh ar dtús.
- 19 Do-bheir an deor do dhruim tuirse
toradh fós go bhfagham bás;
san aimsir thall ní tráth deoire;
ní gnáth le crann feoighe fás.
- 20 Ná fuilngeadh Aibhisidin m'anam
ar iocht mo námhad ní as sia;
is mairg leanas ón iúl fhíre
an triur bheanas dínn-ne Dia.
- 21 I n-aimsir ar n-athar naomhtha
gach neach do sgaoil sgéala Dé
ní bhíodh ag sgaoileadh an sgrioptúir
aoinfhear dhíobh rer bh'ionntnúidh é.
- 22 An t-uabhar is as do claidheadh
cuimne an bháis do bheith 'n-a fhail;
do bhíodh a eagla ar an éarlamh
gan díoth eagna i n-éanmhadh air.
13. As Patrick of the bright pens
he despised worldly wealth;
after eagerly loving Mary's Son
every taste was bitter thereafter to him.
14. When cold passes heat comes
the greater was his glory for this
that it was darkened at first;
it then shone forth.
15. His slowness in turning to the Faith
made his piety the more glorious
the glory of his sanctity the greater;
rare the sage without fault.
16. His resisting grace till baptism
kept him not in the end from yielding
he then made peace with God;
by his end is a man to be judged.
17. When he abandoned sin, he
had - what blessing!-
every good quality of his mother,
as well as his own excellence too.
18. O Jesus, what could make likelier
my being helped by this man so dear to Thee
than that I have offended Thee in the past
may my end be not at enmity with thee.
19. Tears of sorrow
bear fruit till we die;
then 'tis no time for tears;
withered tree bears no more.
20. May Augustine let no longer
my soul be at my foes mercy
woe to him who, leaving the true path,
follows the three who rob us of God.
21. Of those in our holy Father's day
who spread God's word
there was none writing on Scripture
with whom he was to be compared
22. All thought of death's nearness
was driven from his mind by pride;
the saint's fear was
to be ignorant of anything.

- 23 Do dhochar i ndiaigh an anma
do fhágaibh d'fhiachaibh air féin
an léigheann cruaidh do char i mbuige
an uair do ghabh chuige céim.
- 24 Dá ordaibh ní hionann riaghail
an fréamh orrdhraic ór fhás siad
- ní hionann méin gach chroinn chnuasaigh -
dá choill a fréimh uasail iad.
- 25 Sint Aibhisdin san iúl díreach
dual dá bhráitribh breith a luirg,
géag mheasa na mogal gcumhra
tobar feasa is umhla an uird.
- 26 Ní hiongnadh gurab é a-dearainn
nach dlighthear breath do bhreith lais;
an tslighe ghlan ó nach gabhaim
gabh nighe m'anaim ret ais.
- 27 Rí an bheatha - nír bheag an conách,
is cisde nar chóir do dhruad -
tug a reic 'n-a dheaghaidh dhuit-se;
meabhair dheit is tuigse tug.
- 28 A bhfuil ar admháil dot fhiortaibh
d'eis do bháis ní bheid gan chlú;
do nós ní nós falaigh feasda
maraidh fós gé theasda tú.
- 29 Do thionnlaic duit do dhíon t'anma
eagna chaol do chaitheadh ria;
do dhula i dtlás as a thuigse
nír lugha an grás duit-se ó Dhia.
- 30 Léighthear insan Léigheann Órdha
uirsgéal fós ó bhfuighear am
ar méar do láimhe ós dá labhra
ní haille sgéal amhna ann.
- 31 Dá fhichid nar bh'ionann martra
moladh dod thaisibh tug siad;
lámh nach meath a dhóigh ar dhuine
do fhóir fa seach uile iad.
- 32 [Ní dearnadh] lé ó ló [th'éaga]
an uaigh fós i bhfuil do chorp
- ar do ghníomhraidh ní fhuil áireamh -
míorbhail nar chuir áireamh ort.
23. Owing to trouble in his soul's darkness
he bound himself
to explain every hard passage
whenever he met one.
24. Different are the Rules of his Orders,
two trees from one noble root,
the famous root whence they sprang
- each fruitful tree has its own nature
25. His brethren should follow
St. Augustine on the straight path;
fruitful fragrant-clustered branch
humblest source of lore for clergy
26. I confess-and 'tis no wonder-
my soul can not be acquitted
for I follow not clean path;
do thou undertake its cleansing
27. The world's Lord made thee
offer for sale-rich treasure!
the memory and intellect He gave thee,
a store wrong to shut up.
28. Thy admitted miracles after death
will not go unpraised;
thy glory will not be hidden,
it lives on tho' thou art gone
29. To save thy soul, god gave thee
to expend subtle wisdom about it;
not less the grace given thee by God
for thy failing away from his knowledge
30. In the Golden Legend is read
a story, whence can be got (?)
about thy finger; not finer
-I may mention this-is.....(?)
31. The forty who had various sufferings
brought glory to thy relics;
thy had that fails no man's trust
cured them all.
32. Since thy death there was not wrought
by the clay wherein lies thy body
any wonder which did not increase thy glory
there is no numbering them.

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| <p>33 Do ibh an fear le bhfríoth sláinte
- Sint Aibhisdin do b'é a liaigh -
uisge glan do iarr a ibhe
nar ghabh mian dighe 'n-a diaidh.</p> | <p>33. The man who was healed
- Augustine was his curer -
drank pure water; he asked for it
and thirsted for no drink thereafter.</p> |
| <p>34 Gur bhac do mhnaoi dar mhúin crábhadh
'n-a codladh do-chonnaic fhís
an bhean ar dtéaghadh a toile
déanamh na gcean roimhe a-rís.</p> | <p>34. The woman, whose passion was hot
and whom he had converted,
saw when asleep a vision
and it checked her from sin ever more.</p> |
| <p>35 Fad a chaithréime re a cumadh
córaide dhamh dul dá roinn;
ceilfidh mé go fóill na fearta
acht gur fhóir sé dearca an doill.</p> | <p>35. The length of telling his victory-roll
would be reason for me to tell it;
but I shall omit for a time his miracles
except his curing the blind man's eyes.</p> |
| <p>36 Nír iompó a shaidhbhreas ná a shocracht
Sint Aibhisdin ón iúl ghlan
a chorp nó gur fheith don anmain;
bheith bocht i dtalmhain do togh.</p> | <p>36. His wealth and comfort turned
not Augustine from the true path;
he chose to be poor on earth
till he had guarded his body for his soul.</p> |

Toghaim.

Fr. McKenna considered the reference in v.24 to 'two trees' from one noble root' to be an allusion to the existence of communities of men and women following the rule of St. Augustine.⁸

The poem itself refers in verse 30 to a story that may be read 'insan Léigheann Órdha'. The 'Léigheann Órdha' is to be identified with the *Legenda Aurea* of Jacobus de Voragine (+1298). This was a famous compendium of edifying stories which was very popular all over Europe in the late medieval period. It is frequently quoted in Irish sources.⁹

Fr. M.B. Hackett O.S.A. has, in correspondence with the writer, made some very interesting comments on this poem, and they are summarized here with his kind permission:

v.9. Augustine was not St. Monica's only son, he had a brother, Navigius.

v.12. According to the *Legenda Aurea*, it is stated that after Augustine's

⁸ L. McKenna, *Díogluim Dána* (Dublin, 1938), p.451. P. Ní Chatháin has pointed out the description of Augustine as a 'bráthair bocht' - mendicant friar - in v.17, not directly translated in the English version.

⁹ Gearóid Mac Niocaill, 'Sdair na Lombardach' *Studia Hibernica* i (1961), pp 89-118. For this poem see also Liam P. Ó Cathnía, *Apalóga na bhFíli 1200-1650* (Dublin, 1984), pp. 31-2, 164.

baptism, Ambrose intoned 'Te Deum Laudamus' to which Augustine responded with 'Te Dominum confitemur' and thereafter they alternated to the end of the hymn.¹⁰ In *New Catholic Encyclopedia* xiii, col. 954b, it is stated that many ancient Manuscripts attribute the *Te Deum* to Ambrose and Augustine.

v.20. The 'Three who rob us of God' may be a reference to 1 John 2:16, (the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life); or perhaps to the three things which the *Legenda* states that Augustine despised and abhorred, namely riches, delicacies and honours (*Legenda*, pp. 565-6).

v.21. The reference to 'our holy Father's day' seems to indicate that the author was an Augustinian.

v.24. 'Two trees' could refer to the Canons Regular and Friars.

v.30. The *Legenda Aurea* contains a miraculous story about a finger of the saint, p. 562.

v.31. This is a reference to a story about forty lepers being cured, found in the *Legenda*, p. 565.

v.33. This allusion to a man being healed by drinking pure water is also found in the *Legenda*, p. 564.

v.35. The man whose sight was restored was a shepherd, *Legenda*, pp. 564-5.

II. SOME BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON AUGUSTINIAN POETS AND OTHER AUTHORS OF THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

Fr. F.J. Duany

Andrew Dunlevy's bilingual (Irish/English) Catechism, *An Teagasg Críosduidhe* (Paris, 1742) carries an approbation from F.J. Duany O.E.S.A., 'Doctor of Sorbonne', but it seems that Fr. Duany's approbation was of the English-language text only. Fr. Duany seems to have had very strong links with the court of the exiled Stuart claimant

¹⁰ Th. Graesse (ed.), *Jacobi de Voragine Legenda aurea vulgo historia Lombardica dicta* (Dresden-Leipzig, 1846), p. 561-5.

to the British throne, James III. A recently published work contains many letters of his: See Patrick Fagan, *Ireland in the Stuart Papers 2 Vols* (Dublin, 1995). Fr. Duany may have been related to some prominent Dublin Catholic doctors of the time, Francis and George Duany, see John Meagher, 'Glimpses of 18th Century Dublin Priests' *Reportorium Novum* ii (1957-8) pp. 129-147, especially p. 136: for whom see also Robert E. Ward, John F. Wrynn and Catherine Coogan Ward, *Letters of Charles O'Connor of Belanagare* (Washington D.C. 1988), p. 32. For Dunlevy's Catechism, see Michael Tynan, *Catholic Instruction in Ireland 1720-1950* (Dublin, 1985), pp. 59-84. Fr. F.X. Martin advises that copies of the first edition of Dunlevy's Catechism from the libraries of the Augustinian Friaries of Grantstown and Callan are extant. He states that Duany obtained a licentiate in Theology in Paris in 1736.

Fr. Feargal Dubh (Nioclás) Ó Gadhra

Fr. Hugh Fenning O.P., in his recent 'Augustinian Martyrs and Missionaries 1649-57'. *Collectanea Hibernica* xxxvi-xxxvii (1994-5), pp. 50-59, has printed a document from the archives of *Propaganda Fide* dating from about 1657, listing members of the Irish Augustinian province. The therein-named 'Pater frater Nicolaus Gara' (p. 56), is surely to be identified as this scribe.

Tomás Ó Caiside

An English translation of the *Eachtra* and of some poems ascribed to Ó Caiside was published in 1993: Adrian Kenny, *An Caisideach Bán...* (Ballyhaunis, 1993).

Dr. Peter Mulligan

References to Peter Mulligan are found in Patrick Fagan, *Ireland in the Stuart Papers 2 Vols* (Dublin, 1995). Fr. Michael B. Hackett, has recently published some account of Peter Mulligan in his 'The Irish Augustinians in England and Scotland, 1539-1992', in F.X. Martin and Clare O'Reilly (eds.), *The Irish Augustinians in Rome, 1656-1994 and Irish Augustinian Missions throughout the World* (Rome, 1994), pp. 57-82, especially, pp. 66-67. A further study of Bishop Mulligan by Fr. Hackett is in preparation, one understands.

Liam Inglis

A series of articles on Liam Inglis has recently been published. This series comprises a thesis written in the 1930's, and now published for the first time: see Piaras Ó Móra, 'Liam Inglis, Sagart is File', *Agus*, xxxii, 1, (Eanáir, 1992), pp. 4-6; and Pádraig Ó Callanáin, 'Beirt Fhile

Ó Chorcaigh', *Águs*, xxxii, 4 (Aibreán, 1992), pp. 8-10; 5 (Bealtaine, 1992), pp. 15-17; 6 (Meitheamh, 1992), pp. 4-6; 7 (Iúl, 1992), pp. 19-21; 8 (Lúnasa, 1992), pp. 15-17; 9 (Meán Fomhair, 1992, pp. 19-21; 10 (Deireadh Fomhair, 1992), pp. 8-10; 11 (Samhain, 1992), pp. 15-17; 12 (Nollaig, 1992), pp. 9-10; xxxiii, 1 (Eanáir, 1993), pp. 8-9); 2 (Feabhra, 1993), pp. 11-12; 3 (Márta, 1993), pp. 11-13; See also the following numbers of *Águs* for a continuation of this series dealing with another poet but making occasional mention of Liam Inglis. According to Michael Quane, 'Charleville Endowed School', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland* 88 (1958), pp. 25-48, (p.45), Liam Inglis conducted a classical school in the town of Charleville for a time before he joined the Augustinian Order, which because of its superiority to the endowed school in the town, attracted pupils of all denominations. For L. Inglis see also W.D. O'Connell, 'Augustiniana Corcagiae 1746-1834' in *Anal. Hib.* 12 (1943) pp. 165-174, (esp. pp. 165-169).

Fr. Liam de Búrc

Fr. Hugh Fenning O.P., 'Letters from Galway: 1772-1805' in *Collectanea Hibernica* 36/37 (1994-5) pp. 174-195 (esp. p. 175), notes that Fr. William Bourke was prior of Ballyhaunis 1770-1778, and the provincial O.S.A. 1767-1771: see also Fr. Fenning's *The Undoing of the Friars of Ireland* (Louvain, 1972), pp. 280, 300-1, 318; and W.J. Battersby, *A History of all the Abbeys, Convents, Churches and other Religious Houses of the Order particularly of the Hermits of St. Augustine in Ireland* (Dublin, 1856), pp. 64, 236. See also an article on Murrisk by Pádraig Ó Mórain in *Mayo News* (September, 1957).¹¹

Cork

Diarmaid Ó CATHÁIN

¹¹ These notes supplement information given in the present writer's 'Augustinian Friars and Literature in Irish 1600-1900' in *Analecta Augustiniana* LVIII (1995) pp. 101-152, to which the following corrections might also be noted:

p. 126, l.10, after 'McDonald', insert 'The Chieftain of the Region was MacDonald of Glengarry - a cadet Branch of the MacDonald Family.

l.16, for 'more or less the same language' read 'related dialects of the same language'

l.20, delete 'and the Isles'

p. 144, l.5 from end, for 'apostasized' read 'apostatized'

p. 146, n.174, for 'four million people', read 'over two million people within six years'.

p. 151, l.7, for 'a Professor' read 'stated to have been a Professor'.

l.8 for 'Dean' read 'described as Dean...'

I would like to thank M.P. Ní Chatháin, Fr. M.B. Hackett, Fr. John O'Connor and Fr. F.X. Martin for their help, and Ms. Sharon Ryan for typing this article.