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Two letters in Irish from Domhnall Mac Suibhne OSA in Nantes (1640) [with index]

Editor's note: the following article is in three parts. In part one, Pádraig Ó Macháin introduces the texts and presents both the transcriptions and translations into English. In part two, Éamon Ó Ciosáin discusses the historical context of the letters, with special reference to early modern letter writing. In part three, Ciaran O'Scea outlines the Spanish context for the letters and presents a transcription of the interrogation by Spanish officials of Fearghal Dubh Ó Gadhra and Bernard Ó hUiginn.

PART I: THE TEXTS

Pádraig Ó Macháin

The two letters in Irish presented here were brought to light by Dr Ciaran O'Scea in the Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), where they are classified under Guerra y Marina (GYM) in legajo or bundle 3203.¹ Both were written from Nantes on 6 November 1640 by Domhnall Mac Suibhne, a native of Co. Sligo and a priest of the Order of St Augustine. He had left home on 31 July to accompany the order's Irish provincial, Dáibhí Mac an Chalbhaigh (Calvy), on a visitation of the order in Munster, parting from him at Waterford on 10 September. At the time of writing, Fr Domhnall says that he was already nearly three weeks in France, and that he had reached Nantes on 31 October. On account of his poor proficiency in Latin, the provincial had ordered that Domhnall should study Arts for three years at Bordeaux before proceeding to Spain to study Theology.

Mac Suibhne's correspondents are two Augustinian students, 'Brother Fearell' (Letter 1) and the provincial's brother Fr Pádraig Mac an Chalbhaigh (Letter 2), both of whom are in Spain. Brother Fearell is to be identified as Fr Fearghal Dubh Ó Gadhra, whose name in religion was Nicolás, or Nicolaus a Sancta Maria. This Sligo priest is familiar to scholars of

¹ Letter 1, together with the contemporary Spanish translation, and a draft modern English translation, was originally first published in the catalogue of the exhibition, 'The Irish and the Hispanic Monarchy (1529–1800). Connections in time and space', held in the Archivo General de Simancas (Valladolid, Spain), January–June 2013. See Archivo General de Simancas, *Los irlandeses y la Monarquía Hispánica (1529–1800). Vínculos en espacio y tiempo* (Madrid, 2012), pp 263–71. For assistance with aspects of the present article we are grateful to Kenneth Nicholls, Fearghus Ó Fearghail, Diarmuid Ó Catháin and Nollaig Ó Muraíle.

Irish literature as the writer of an important manuscript anthology of Irish bardic poetry, ‘The Book of O’Gara’.² This manuscript (RIA MS 23 F 16) was written in Brussels and Lille between the years 1655 and 1659. A preface that was added to the book in 1686, after it had been brought back to Ireland by Fr Nicolás, informs us that prior to his exile in Flanders, he had enjoyed a high reputation in Ireland ‘after first completing his education in Spain’.³ These letters, therefore, add significant details to the biography of Fr Nicolás including the date of his sojourn in Spain, his associates and fellow-students, and some minute family details: his mother sends him three shirts with Fr Mac Suibhne, which cannot be delivered.

Further information about Fr Nicolás is to hand due to the fact that these letters were intercepted by the Spanish authorities, and that Fr Nicolás and his companion, Fr Brian Ó hUiginn, were obliged, under duress, to supply Spanish translations of the originals in Seville in January 1641. During the course of his interrogation, Fr Nicolás revealed that he and Fr Mac Suibhne had been together in the priory of Ardnaree. He had been in Seville for about three years. His place of origin was recorded by the Spanish notary as ‘la villa de Sesumareejaray’. This is the townland of Sessuegarry⁴ (parish of Achonry, barony of Leyny), just north of Banada priory and north-west of Tobercurry, Co. Sligo.

The chatty, informal nature of these letters sets them apart from the formal communications of well-known letter-writers of the sixteenth century such as An Calbhach Ó Domhnaill, Seán Ó Néill or Séamus mac Muiris,⁵ and, indeed, in the seventeenth century, from the two addresses to Philip III by Ó Súilleabháin Béirre that are also preserved in the Archivo General de Simancas.⁶ Even less official letters, such as that of 1605 from Giolla Brighde Ó hEódhusa to Robert Nugent,⁷ or from Fínghean Mac Carthaigh to Fear Feasa Ó’n Cháinte c. 1600,⁸ observe a stylistic formality. This stylistic element in letters written in Irish can be traced as far back as the twelfth century, to Bishop Find’s note to Áed mac meic Crimthainn preserved in a marginal entry in the Book of Leinster.⁹

2 Pádraig Ó Macháin, ‘“One glimpse of Ireland”: the manuscript of Fr Nicolás (Fearghal Dubh) Ó Gadhra, OSA’, in Raymond Gillespie and Ruairí Ó hUiginn, *Irish Europe, 1600–1650: writing and learning* (Dublin, 2013), pp 135–62.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 162.

4 An Brainse Logainmneacha (logainm.ie) suggests a derivation from either Seiseadh Uí Gadhra or Seiseadh Mhic Fhearaigh.

5 Anthologised, along with other relevant material, in Colm Ó Lochlainn, *Tobar fíorghlan Gaedhilge: deismireachta na teangadh 1450–1853* (Dublin, 1939).

6 R.A. Breatnach, ‘Donal O’Sullivan Beare to King Philip III 20th February, 1602’, *Éigse* 6/4 (1952) pp 314–25; Brian Ó Cuív, ‘An appeal to Philip III of Spain by Ó Súilleabháin Béirre, December 1601’, *Éigse* 30 (1997), pp 18–26.

7 Ó Lochlainn, *Tobar fíorghlan Gaedhilge*, pp 67–8.

8 Pádraig de Brún, ‘Litir ó Thor Londain’ in *Éigse* 22 (1987), pp 49–53.

9 Book of Leinster (TCD MS 1339), p. 288 lower margin; see R.I. Best, O.J. Bergin and Michael A. O’Brien, *The Book of Leinster: formerly Lebar Na Núachongbála I* (Dublin, 1954) p. xvi.

Letters such as the examples just mentioned contrast with the present documents, which are personal in nature and miscellaneous in content, containing an amount of family and local news that features marriages and deaths. The two letters are therefore aligned with the more fraternal side of letter-writing in Irish in the early-modern era that is in evidence in particular among seventeenth-century papers surviving from the Irish community in exile. Such letters would include those of Fr Donnchadh Ó Maonaigh,¹⁰ for example, and would belong to the type of communication requested by Róise Ní Dhochartaigh in her letter of September 1642:

Guidhim sibh (más éidir libh) gach minsgéla dá mbeanann le cóigeadh Uladh dfagháil agus a ccur chugainn agus cíá as beó, nó as marbh da núaislibh agus cionnus atá Tír Chonaill ...¹¹

The Mac Suibhne letters, therefore, present a variety of topics, and some of the wider topics frame the correspondence in the momentous era in which they were hurriedly composed. Events referred to include some in which many of those mentioned in the letters would later be caught up and would not survive. The Bishops' Wars – that would have a direct effect on events in Ireland in 1641 – provide a general backdrop to the letters, explained by the swelling of the garrison at Carrickfergus, among which were many officers drawn from the neighbourhood of the correspondents, including Gearailt, the brother of Fr Pádraig Mac an Chalbhaigh. This war, in turn, is seen by Fr Mac Suibhne as delaying the progress of the apprehensively anticipated Plantation of Connacht, to which the rivalry between Fearghal Ó Gadhra – patron of the Four Masters – and Charles Coote adds another local ingredient.

The letters are also important for the information that they contain with regard to local Sligo history and genealogy, and also with regard to religious history, the history of the Augustinians in particular. We are presented with a snapshot of the Order in Ireland in the autumn of 1640. Many of the priests mentioned in the letters are identifiable from research published by scholars such as F.X. Martin and Benignus Millett, and identifications

¹⁰ Paul Walsh, *Gleanings from Irish manuscripts* (2nd ed., Dublin, 1933), pp 53–69.

¹¹ 'I entreat you (if you can) to get every morsel of news pertaining to the province of Ulster and to send them to us, and [tell me] who of their nobility is alive or dead, and how fares Tír Chonaill...' (OFM-UCD MS A 30, Item 5). See Ó Lochlainn, *Tobar fíorghlan Gaedhilge*, p. 123.

are offered below based on their research.¹² Others named still await identification. Fr Mac Suibhne's being compelled by his provincial to study Latin at Bordeaux before being allowed to complete his studies in Spain is one of the micro-details within this larger picture. So too the reference to Fr Nicolás, a young Irish priest at the Irish College of Seville, being in need of mass-stipends to support him, which is probably one of the most fascinating aspects of Letter 1, as is the list of masses harvested by Fr Mac Suibhne for him in response to this.

Though much shorter than the first letter, and to a certain extent a précis of its contents, Letter 2 contains information that complements that in Letter 1 as well as supplying information not found there. In the former category is the identity of the Taaffe brother who died in London, and indeed that of the 'Brother Fearell' himself. In the latter category are details such as those concerning Fr Pádraig's immediate family (his brother in the army, the death of his sister), or the Burkes of Turlough, or further information relative to the Order, the two priests already in Bordeaux for example.

Language of the letters

The letters transcribed and translated here share with other Irish letters of the period an overall adherence to what is recognisably early modern Irish interspersed with colloquialisms as would be expected in informal documents. That fact, together with the Gaelic script and abbreviations employed in the letters, points to the writer, Domhnall Mac Suibhne, and to the recipients, being well acquainted and comfortable with the Gaelic written tradition. In the Book of O'Gara we have ample testimony to the acquaintance of Fr Nicolás with that tradition, and in one of his colophons he hints at having once undergone education in the subject.¹³ Nevertheless,

12 F.X. Martin, 'Sanguinea Eremus Martyrum Hiberniae Ord. Eremit. S.P. Augustini (1655)' in *Arch. Hib.*, 15 (1950), pp 74–91; F.X. Martin, 'Irish material in the Augustinian Archives, Rome, 1354–1624' in *Arch. Hib.*, 19 (1956), pp 61–134; M.B. Hackett, 'The Tirry documents in the Augustinian General Archives' in *Arch. Hib.*, 20 (1957), pp 98–122; F.X. Martin, 'The Tirry documents in the Archives de France, Paris' in *Arch. Hib.*, 20 (1957), pp 69–97; Benignus Millett, 'Catalogue of Irish material in vols. 140–143 of the *Scrittura originali riferite nelle congregazione generali* in Propaganda Archives' in *Collect. Hib.*, 13 (1970), pp 21–60; Benignus Millett, 'Calendar of Volume 13 of the *Fondo di Vienna* in Propaganda Archives: Part 2, ff 201–401' in *Collect. Hib.*, 25 (1983), pp 30–62; Hugh Fenning, 'Augustinian martyrs and missionaries: 1649–1657' in *Collect. Hib.*, 36–7 (1994–5), pp 50–58. Another important source is Nollaig Ó Muraile (ed.), *Leabhar Mór na nGenealach ... by Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh* (Dublin, 2003), abbreviated *L. Gen.* below. As many of these publications contain references to standard sources such as Barnabas O'Ferrall and Robert O'Connell papers edited by John Kavanagh in *Commentarius Rinuccinianus* (Dublin, 1932–49), John Gilbert (ed.) *History of the affairs of Ireland from 1641–1652* (Dublin, 1879–80), and John Lynch's, *De praesulibus Hiberniae*, edited by John Francis O'Doherty (Dublin, 1944), it has not been thought necessary to repeat them here. No doubt, further identifications will be made in due course.

13 Ó Macháin, 'Ó Gadhra', 152.

a letter from Fr Nicolás that is quoted in Letter 1 indicates that he wrote that letter, or part of it, in English. It could be that the choice of language was forced on him in order that the letter might be forwarded unhindered from Spain to Domhnall Mac Suibhne in Ireland. On the other hand, a parallel instance of mixed-language correspondence exists in the letter of Fr Cormac Hicky of Dunmoylan, Co. Limerick, to his brother, Fr Anthony, in 1626. That letter begins in English and quickly changes over to Irish. It also parallels the Mac Suibhne letters in combining discussion of Church matters with news of their immediate family.¹⁴

The letters of Domhnall Mac Suibhne, then, add to the evidence for what must have been a commonplace activity among the educated Irish-speaking gentry in Ireland in the seventeenth century: letter-writing in Irish. In that regard one is reminded of the position in contemporary Gaelic Scotland where it was recalled that ‘it was customary in the country for gentlemen and ladies to correspond in Gaelic’.¹⁵ One might add that the level of native learning among these scions of prominent North-Connacht families, and presented in these letters, is in line with the long tradition of manuscript production and scholarship in that part of Ireland over many centuries.

In the following transcription, contractions have been expanded silently; the Gaelic ampersand (7) is represented as ‘agus’; proper names have been capitalized; word-separation has been effected where required; line-endings are indicated with a forward slash.

14 Brendan Jennings (ed.), *Wadding papers: 1614–38* (Dublin 1953), pp 240–41.

15 John M. Bannerman and Ronald Black, ‘A sixteenth-century Gaelic letter’ in *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 13/1 (1978), pp 56–65, at p. 63.

Document

Letter I: transcription

[page 1]

Brother Fearell / Do glac me do [2 *above*] liteir as an Spainn, ní failligh do bhi agum do thaoibh gan / freagra do chuir chugud, acht mo shúil fein, le dul go soigh thú féin gach la / da ttainic dhamh o glacus do litreacha, si áite ar chinn Dia dhamh, theacht don / Fhrainc ar an deadhuair, Oidhce Shamhna do thainic me go Nance, ata an / lung ag imtheacht amaroch, nach feidir leam leath mo sgeul fein, na sgéul / dhuine eile, do chur cugad. aon sgeul amhain mor ata a nEirinn, mur ata an / an [*sic*] garbh cogadh mor, garrtha, sin eideir an Sagsanoch, agus an tAlbonach, do / gabh na hAlbonuigh dha bhaile mhór, ón tSagsanoch .i. Neew Castell, agus baile / eile, ata 10 mile Eirunnoch a ngairusún a gCarrug Fheargusa, ata Sir Séur/lus Cút na choireneul ann, agus Teaiboid Táth, na Lieutenant aige, ata / Brían Mac Donnchaidh na chaipín ann, Wallter Mac Suibhne mur fhear bratuígh / aige, maille moran eile duaislibh na conndae, ata bheirt mhac eile / do cloinn an tiagera na ccaiptinigh ann, .i. Lúcas, agus Frainc, do [fuair *above*] an fear / eile bás a[n *cancelled*] Lonndoin, do fuar Maol Mordha Óg bás, agus mo mhathuir, Maire / inghean an Dualtuigh Rúadh bás, do fuair Sorcha Ní Uiggin ingean Chormaic / bás, agus í posta ag Uilliam Óg mac Connla, Mic Sioghraidh, moran eile, nach bhfuil / búain agadsa dháibh, ata Mairgreug, Oilill, Anadbladh, gan phosamh go foill / ata Fearghul ar éis bhúaidh do bhreth ar Sir Charles Cút, se ní adeir / Tomas go mbainfigh se leath a dhuthaigh dFeargul san bpleantasion / ata fios a choda féin ag gach duine don pleantasion, ma théid ar / aghaidh, ní bhfuil moill ar bith air, acht Dia amhain, ata dochus agumsa [agus?]⁶ / ag moran eile, no go sguirigh an cogadh so na hAlbun, nach racuigh se ar / aghaidh ar aon chor, do chuaidh se ar aghaidh acht amhain, sealbh do thabhairt da / gach duine, (mur dordaigh Laodhoch Liathmhuine) ata Brighid ingean Eoghuin Mhic / Diarmuda, posda ag O cConchabhur, mas O Conchobhur é, ata Domhnoll O Conchabur / mac Fhir Gan Ainm, agus Maire ingean Í Conchabhur posda le cheile, do neamh/thoil a muinteire ar gach taoibh, ata Mathgamhuin O hUiggin posta le hin/ghain, Aindreamh Ui Chraoidhain, 5 céud punta an spreth ar aon clar / amhain, is feasoch [me *above*] an mhéid is cheisd ortsa dot chairdibh go bhfuilid / slán uile, ata do mhathuir slán, do chuir si leamsa trí leinteach cugad / agus faráor géur nach feidir leamsa a ccur cugad do bhrigh nach bhfuil / feim agum pfein orramh, agus a mhéud ataid duirusbaidh ortsa, o se / an papeur is feidir do cur chugad ag sin cugad é, is feasoch [me *above*] gur sgribhuis / cugum ag radha leam, comhnamh aifrionn dfaghuil duit an eirinn, do / labhuir me le gach brathair; agus le

16 A small tear occurs in the paper at this point.

gach sagart muinteroch da bhfuil agad / ata [a lorg *above*] orum, ata cosg an ceud cása agum dhuit daifriionnuibh, ar gach aon / for I remember you wrote unto [mee *above*] this tearme in your letter, if you / send mee masses I will want nothing, if not, béud mur Eogun mac Bríain / Úaine, dar mo bhreithir is mor do goillfeadh orumsa riachtonus do bheith / ortsa, agus ar mo chor fein a fhoirighín, is mor goill orum do chasaid / ar Dhonnchadh Dhubh, agus ar a phacéad go hAirt, agus [gan *above*] fiú na beannachtain chugadsa / dar do laimhse, ni cuirfigh mise fiú na beannachta conn Airt, na chonn / Philip Uasuil Uí Uiginn, ni he amhain afrionn, do bhrígh nach fiú léo sgribadh cugum / [*transversely, outer margin:*] ag so sgeula an uird chugud, ar tús ata Dáibhi Mac an Chalbaugh na Provinsial, ata Maol Muire na Phrioir a mBeul Ath hAmhnus, ata Domhnoll Ó / Nún na Phrioir a nArd na Ria, ata Uilliam O Muilabhuill na Phrioir san mBeann Fhada, Seuruin a mBaile an Roba, Tadhg Ballog sa bPriosún, / Tadhg O Conuill a nDún Mhor, Edward Bodking a nGaillibh, do bhi me fein agus Cathal Óg a ccuidachta an Provinsial ar visitation a cCóigeadh / Mumhan, ag so na prioirigh ata ann, ar tús an tí is annsa leam .i. Semus Mac Mathgamhna a cCorcuigh, Mhichahel [*sic*] Sarseul a Lumneach, / Richard Toibín a tToburad Arann, Mac an tSeanuinuigh a bhFighe Ard, Emunn Tobín a nDún Garbhan, Micheill Baron a bPortlairge, Mairtin / Puirrseul a cCalluinn, Donnchadh O Keineidigh a Ros Mic Riún [*sic*], Henry Mac Gibbuin a Nás Ladhan, Semus Talboid a mBaile Ath Cliath, Foord Galta / a nDroighud Atha, ag sin mur ata an tord a dul ar aghaidh, do thoil De, go humcuigh, do cuaidh Sean Mac Daibhi don Róimhe mur Agent, ata / Aibhistín O hUiginn annsa Talamh Iachturoch, do togadh an cúaine úd do bhí an Ard na Ria, do glacadh mac Aodh Í Eadhra .i. Feilim, Uilliam O Meachuir / oganoch eile as Muinteir Eoluis a nArd na Ria, ós cionn ar sgribuis cugum, Aongus Rúadh a mBeul Ath hAmhnus, ataid uile profesus [*page 2*] ní feas damhsa ce glacfuid o sho mach, ata moran mionsgeulta eile an Eirinn nach fath uaimse ar / a sgribadh, agus deibhir mhor orum, do thaoibh na naibhfrionn ag sin cugad íad, ar Eogun O Conchabur sé fighid / aifrionn, ar Cormac O Maolagain 40 aifrionn, ar Eogun O Shuillamháin 60 aifrionn, ón nathair Pol Mha/g Ranuill 24 aifrionn, on athair Emuinn O Eadhra 40 aifrionn, on athair Ardul Mac Kináigh / 24 aifrionn on athar Cairbre Mac Eogain 12 aifrionn, o Cairbre eile, 12 aifrionn, ón atair / Donnchadh O Mhuil Mhíhile 12 aifrionn, o Ruadhriogh O Bhraonain 12, o Conchabur Bhuidhe 12 aifrionn / o Seán glas Mac Donnchaidh 6 aifrionn, aon aifrionn amhain o Thomas O Luinsge; se mheasum go bhfuil / ann uile, a chúig déug, agus trí fighid, agus trí cheud an tsuim uile, ni cuirim pfein aon / aifrionn cugad no sgribhur [*corrected from sgribhud*] cugum don rioghochtsa .i. go Burdéis, ar a shon sin ma chruaidhunn / ort cuir orumsa aon chéud amhain, iarruim mur athcuingidh ort na failligh gan sgribadh go Burdéis / gach uile sgeula olc, no maith, da bhfuil agad, mi

[sic] mó acht le trí seachtmhuine ataim ar thalamh / na Fraince, do chuir an Provinsial diacaibh orum da ndeanuinn mhealadhacha annso, dul donn / Spainne do dheanamh na diadhacht, ni fhacus aon brathair dom ord go foill, ní feas damh / ca ccuirfid me go foill, sgríbh thusa go Burdeur [sic], ataim dearbhtha gurb ann bheus me gan / amhrus, ma bhíann uiruisbaidh aifrionn ort sgríbhaidh cugum, atáit se céud aifrionn agumsa faoí / laimh an Provinsial, agus cuirfighur moran eile cugum, ma sgríbhúim cucu ar a cheann, ata / fearg ag Cathal Og, agus ag Oiliverus leatsa, do[n cancelled] thaoibh nach sgríbh [sic] nach sgríbunn tú cucu, se / mheasum ma sgríbunn tu cugumsa gach sgeula, s gach coimhuirle, is fearr tighur dhuit, ataim / dearbhtha go ccuirfead cugad se ceud aifrionn, duinne ar aon, na bí cas agad an áon ní / ma bheir aifrionn súas tu gabhuimse orum thu, ma nighur mo choimhuirle féin, do réir / mur sgríbhéod cugad, bi orumsa thu fein, agus me fein do thabhart suas le haifrionnuibh, [do cancelled] / do thoil De, mur nach raibh mise mo shárLainnontuigh, níor gabh an Provinsial úaim gan teacht / don talamhsa dfoghluim Laidhne, go ceann trí mblian, bí áit agadsa reigh dhamh, annsin / dar mo coinnsias ata ór, agus airgid, agum go foill, is eigin damh moran do chathamh / ata fhios agum nach bhfuil uiruisbaidh ar bith ar Airt. na eir Philip Uasul O Uigginn, do chuir / an Provinsial a churam [orum above] sgríbadh go Padruic, ni feas damh ar domhan ca hainm an chon/bheint, a bhfuil no an chathuir, da mbeith ni bhfuil am agum ar sgríbadh cuige, anos, Oidhce / Luanosa do sgarus le Mairgreig, do chuir a beannocht cugad, ataid slan uile, an clann, agus an mhéid / ata na cceisd ortsa uile, lor so agus deibhir romhór orumsa, ata fhios agad fein da / mbeidir leamsa, ni he amhain do thrí leinteacha féin do cuir chugad, go ccuirfinn trí lein/teach eile uaim pfein cugad. do bearr leam o nach don Spainn do cuadhús, nach ttuguinn aon / leinigh leam oir ataim ag caillamh da lúach lena ccaraisde, saoir líneudoc annso / na nEirinn, go mór, da bfaica an mhéid Erunnoch ata ann sin uile, tabhuir mo da / mhíle beannocht duit fein, s guidhe ar mo mhathuir, agus orum pfein, deitigh Maoilir / aon aifrionn do thabhairt damhsa, no sgríbadh fein cugadsa, do geall lung do cuir cugad faoina / lan aifrionn, sguirim feasda, faguim do chomhdach ar Dhia mor, mur sgríbhúir cugum / go Burdéis, adeirud gur mairg do sgríbadh cugad, ag sin an duilloge eile ann a bhfuilid / na haibhfinn [sic] sgríba ann sin, on muinnteir do thug uadha íad, anos sguirim na deana / amhrus ar do dhearbrathair bocht go bás .i. an brathair bocht .i. Domhnoll Mac Suibhne

Nantes the 6 of 9ber
1640

na dearmuid supescription [sic]
Spainnis do sgríbadh[us cancelled] ar an liteir
so, conn Padruic Mic an Chalbaigh

Letter I: translation

Brother Fearell

I received your two letters from Spain: the reason I did not reply to you is not negligence on my part but my own expectation to go to you every day since I received your letters. The place that God ordained for me, was to come to France in due course. I arrived at Nantes on the eve of All Saints. The ship is leaving tomorrow, so that I cannot send you half my own news or that of anybody else.

There is one big story in Ireland: that terrible great heated war between the Englishman and the Scot. The Scots have captured two big towns from the English, Newcastle and another town.¹⁷ Ten thousand Irish are garrisoned in Carrickfergus. Sir Charles Coote is a colonel there, and Theobald Taaffe is his lieutenant; Brian Mac Donnchaidh is a Captain there and Walter Mac Suibhne his ensign, along with many more of the nobility of the county. Two other sons of the lord [Taaffe] are captains there, i.e. Luke and Frank. The other man died in London.¹⁸

Maol Mórdha Óg¹⁹ has died, and my mother, Máire daughter of An Dubhaltach Ruadh.²⁰ Sorcha Ní Uiginn, daughter of Cormac, has died, and she was the wife of Uilliam Óg son of Connla Mac Sioghraidh. Many more [died] to whom you have no connection. Mairgréug, Oilill, Anábladh are still unmarried.

Fearghal [Ó Gadhra] has gained a victory over Sir Charles Coote. What Tomás says is that he will deprive Fearghal of half his territory in the plantation. Everyone knows his own portion of the plantation, if it goes ahead. It will not be delayed except by God alone. I and many more hope that it will not proceed at all, until this Scottish war ends. It had gone ahead provided everyone had been given [his own] possession, as Laoch Liathmhuine ordained.²¹

Brigid daughter of Eóghan Mac Diarmada has married Ó Conchubhair, if [indeed] he is Ó Conchubhair. Domhnall Ó Conchubhair, son of Fear gan Ainm, and Máire daughter of Ó Conchubhair, have married each other against the wishes of their families on both sides. Mathghamhuin Ó hUiginn has married the daughter of Aindreamh Ó Craoidheáin, five hundred pounds as a dowry [laid out] on one table!

I know that those of your friends for whom you are concerned are all

17 Newburn.

18 Identified as Christopher in Letter 2, where a fourth brother, Peadar Buidhe OSA, is also mentioned.

19 'Don Milero Suyne' in Ó Gadhra's translation below.

20 Possibly a Mac Siúrtáin (a branch of the Costello family): identification suggested by Dr Nollaig Ó Muraíle, based on *L. Gen* 828.2-3.

21 A reference to a legendary seventh-century king of Fear Maighe, Cuanna mac Cailchín, *alias* Laoch Liathmhaine, renowned for his generosity, and for granting everyone whatever they wished for: 'a mhian féin da gach nduine / dáiltear lé Laoch Liathmhuine' (Geoffrey Keating, *Foras Feasa* iii, p. 130; *PRIA* 30 (1912), pp 275-6).

well; your mother is well – she sent you three shirts with me and alas that I cannot send them to you since I have no use for them myself and you being so needy. Since it is possible to send you paper, here you have it.

I know that you wrote to me telling me to get help of masses for you in Ireland. I spoke with every brother and priest who are your friends: the results of my efforts are visible on me – I have enough masses for you, [pledged] from each one [of them], to relieve your primary necessity;²² for I remember you wrote unto me this term in your letter, ‘if you send me masses I will want nothing, if not, I will be like Eóghan mac Briain Uaine’. I swear that it would grieve me greatly that you should be in want while I had the means of relieving it.

Your complaint about Donnchadh Dubh grieved me greatly, and about his package [that he sent] to Art with not as much as a blessing for you [in it]. I swear that I will not send as much as a blessing to Art, or to Philip Uasal Ó hUiginn, not to mention a mass, since they do not think it worth their while to write to me.

Here is news of the Order for you. Firstly, Dáibhí Mac an Chalbhaigh²³ is the Provincial. Maol Muire²⁴ is prior in Ballyhaunis, Domhnall Ó Nún is prior in Ardnaree, Uilliam Ó Muilabhuill²⁵ is prior in Banada, Séurúin²⁶ in Ballinrobe, Tadhg Ballog is in Prison,²⁷ Tadhg Ó Conuill²⁸ is in Dunmore, Edward Bodkin²⁹ in Galway.

Cathal Óg³⁰ and I accompanied the Provincial on a visitation in the province of Munster. Here are the Priors who are there. Firstly my favourite, Séamus Mac Mathghamhna³¹ in Cork, Míchéal Sairséal in Limerick, Richard Tóibín³² in Tipperary, Mac an tSeanuinigh in Fethard, Éamunn

22 See ‘do chosg a ccása’ (‘to relieve their ... necessities’) (*Ériu* 15 (1948), pp 62–3 (*Rule of St Clare*)).

23 Probably to be identified with ‘Pater Frater Augustinus a Conceptione’: *Collect. Hib.* 13 (1970), p. 41; *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 54.

24 Maol Muire Ó hUiginn: *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 55.

25 *Arch. Hib.* 15 (1950), p. 89; 20 (1957), p. 116.

26 ‘Jerome/Hieronymus (Mc)Gibbo(o)n’ (but referred to as ‘el Padre Fray Diego’ in the Spanish translation below): *Arch. Hib.* 20 (1957), p. 100; *Collect. Hib.* 25 (1983), p. 48; *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), pp 54, 55, 56.

27 Apparently a reference to the townlands of Prison (North, South and East), par. Manulla, bar. Carra, Co. Mayo; cf. Spanish translation: ‘el Padre Fray Tadeo en el convento de Carcel’. In Letter 2 he is said to be in Murrisk. ‘Tadeus Mallach’: *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 56.

28 *Arch. Hib.* 15 (1950), p. 87; 20 (1957), p. 114 n.2; *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 52.

29 *Arch. Hib.* 20 (1957), p. 100; *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 54.

30 ‘Sir Calbhach Ó Conchabhair Sligigh, Donnchadh Ó Conchabhair Sligigh, agus Cathal Óg, brathair Aug., mec Domnuill I Chonchabhair Shligigh m. Cathail Óig m. Taidhg mc Cathail Óig’, *L. Gen.* 221.6.

31 James O’Mahony: *Arch. Hib.* 20 (1957), p. 98–105; *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 54 n.12. Uncertainty as to the date of Fr O’Mahony’s death is resolved by a note inserted in RIA, MS 24 P 8 (p. 245) by Seafraidh Ó Donnchadha, who records that he died at Ceapach Ainín (Cappaganneen, par. Knockane, bar. Dunkerron North), Co. Kerry on 3 March 1666 (Old Style).

32 *Arch. Hib.* 2 (1913), p. 33; 62 (2009), p. 32.

Tóibín³³ in Dungarvan, Míchéal Barron³⁴ in Waterford, Máirtín Puirseál³⁵ in Callan, Donnchadh Ó Ceinnéidigh³⁶ in Ross, Henry Mac Gibbúin³⁷ in Naas, Séamus Talbóid³⁸ in Dublin, Foord Gallda³⁹ in Drogheda. That is how the Order is progressing adequately, by the will of God.

Seán Mac Dáibhí has gone as an Agent to Rome. Aibhistín Ó hUiginn⁴⁰ is in the Low Country. The group that were in Ard na Ria were elected: Féilim, the son of Aodh Ó hEadhra, was accepted, [as was] Uilliam Ó Meachair,⁴¹ another youth in Ard na Ria from Muintir Eolais – in addition [to those] about whom you wrote to me – [and] Aonghus Ruadh in Ballyhaunis: they are all professed. I do not know whom they will accept from now on.

There are many other little stories in Ireland that I do not intend to write about as I am in a great hurry.

Concerning the masses, here you have them: 120 masses [pledged] by Eóghan Ó Conchubhair, 40 masses [pledged] by Cormac Ó Maolagáin, 60 masses [pledged] by Eóghan Ó Súilleabháin, 24 masses from Fr Pól Mág Raghnaill,⁴² 40 masses from Fr Éamonn Ó hEadhra, 24 masses from Fr Ardal Mac Cionnaith, 24 masses from Fr Cairbre Mac Eóghain, 12 masses from another Cairbre, 12 masses from Fr Donnchadh Ó Maoil Mhichíl, 12 from Rudhraighe Ó Braonáin, 12 masses from Conchubhar Buidhe, 6 masses from Seaán Glas Mac Donnchaidh, a single mass from Tomás Ó Luinsge. I believe that altogether there are 375 in total.⁴³ I will not send you any mass myself until you write to me in this kingdom, i.e. Bordeaux. Nevertheless, if you get needy, assign 100 masses to me.

I ask as a favour of you not to neglect to write to Bordeaux [to me], every single story that you have, good or bad. I am no more than three weeks on French soil. The Provincial has directed me, if I do my Arts here, to go to Spain to do Theology. I have not seen any brother of my Order yet. I do not know where they will send me yet. Let you write to Bordeaux. I am certain that it is there I will be without a doubt. If you lack masses write to me. I have 600 masses in the keeping of the Provincial, and many more will be sent to me if I write to them on that account.

33 Edmondus Iobyn/Jobin: *Arch. Hib.* 15 (1950), p. 90; *Arch. Hib.* 20 (1957), p. 122.

34 *Arch. Hib.* 15 (1950), p. 88; 20 (1957), p. 115.

35 *Arch. Hib.* 19 (1956), pp 128 n.5, 130, 132; 62 (2009), p. 15.

36 *Arch. Hib.* 2 (1913), p. 35; 15 (1950), p. 87; 20 (1957), p. 114 n.3.

37 Henry Gibbon: *Collect. Hib.* 25 (1983), pp 48–9.

38 *Arch. Hib.* 15 (1950), pp 79, 90; *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 57.

39 Called ‘el yngles’ in the Spanish translation by Fr Nicolás below.

40 *Arch. Hib.* 20 (1957), p. 114 n.2; *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 52 n.4; Eleanor Knott, *The bardic poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn* (London 1922) ii, p. 306.

41 *Arch. Hib.* 20 (1957), pp 104 n.1, 114 n.1; *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 56.

42 *Collect. Hib.* 36–7 (1994–5), p. 56.

43 Recte 387.

Cathal Óg and Oilibhéarus⁴⁴ are angry with you because you do not write to them. I think that if you write to me of every story and every counsel, it will be better for you.

I am certain that I will send 600 masses to you for the two of us. Do not worry about anything. If masses lift you up I swear to you, if my advice is followed according as I will write to you, you can depend on me to lift both you and me up with masses, through God's will.

Because I was not a great Latinist, the Provincial would not accept that I should not come to this land to learn Latin for three years. Have a place ready for me then.

By my conscience, I still have gold and silver: I am obliged to spend a lot. I know that neither Art nor Philip Uasal Ó hUiginn want for anything.

The Provincial has tasked me with writing to Pádraig. I do not know at all the name of convent he is in, nor the city. [Even] if I knew, I do not have the time to write to him now.

On the eve of Lughnasa I parted from Mairghréag. She sent her blessing to you. They are all well, the children and all whom you are concerned about.

This will do, and the great hurry I am in. You know yourself that if I could, not only would I send you your own three shirts, but I would send you three of my own shirts. Since it is not to Spain that I went, I would rather that I had not brought any shirt with me, since I am losing their value in carriage. Linen is far cheaper here than in Ireland. If you could only see how many Irish are there altogether.

Give my two thousand blessings to yourself, and pray for my mother and for myself. Maoilir refused to give me any mass, until he should write to you himself. He promised to send a ship to you full of masses.

I end forthwith. I commend you to the protection of the great God.

If you do not write to me at Bordeaux I will say that it was a pity that anyone should write to you.

Here is the other leaf in which the masses are written by those who gave them.

Now I finish. Never doubt your poor brother until death, i.e. the poor brother, i.e. Domhnall Mac Suibhne.⁴⁵

Nantes the 6 of November

1640

Do not forget to write a Spanish superscription on this letter to Pádraig Mac an Chalbhaigh.

44 'Oilbhéarus, brathair S. Aibhisidin, mec Maoilmhuire m. Briain [Mheic Shuibhne]' *L. Gen.* 123.5.

45 'Eoghan, Dubhaltach Óg, agus Domhnall, brathair S. Aibhisidin, mec Ereamhain Rúaidh m. an Dubhaltaigh Rúaidh [Meic Shuibhne]', *L. Gen.* 124.1.

Letter II: transcription

Nantes the 6 of gber

1640

Athair Padruic / do cuir an Provinnsial do curum [orum *above*] sgribadh cugad, .i. do dhearbhratair Daibhi, ni mór go bhfuil / úain agum ar aon fhocal do sgribadh cugad. ata do [duine *cancelled*, dhaoine *above*] muinnterdha slán gloir do Dhia, acht / bás Mhairgreig .i. do dheirbhisiur. do chualuis fein é, ata Gearailt annsa narmail a cCarruig / Fheargusa, do bhí Mairgreug Óg Ingean Mhíle da posamh a teacht damhsa, le Siurtán / Og, mac Bhaitéur Bhuidhe, nior phós Mairgreug Ni Gadhra go foill, do rug Feargul búaid / an aghaidh Sir Sheurlus Cút, ata Concabhur mac Cathail Óig [na *above*] bhaintreabach go foill, ata an clann / slan, agus clann Fhearguil, do cuailuis fein go bhfuil Emunn Mac Mile posda, le do / deirbhisiar .i. Sábh Ingean a Chalbaigh, do [sgribh *above*] Feargul Dubh cugum, go raibh tusa, Aodh O Conchabur / Conla, Brían O hUigginn, an aon coinbheint, slan, [ataim *above*] ag coimhneamha mo sheirbhis dáibh uile / ata ingean Aindreamh Ui Chraoidhain, posda ag Mathgamhuin O Uigginn, ata cogadh mór / garrtha, eidir na hAlbonuigh, agus na Saxonuigh, ní bhfuil moill ar an bpleantasion / acht sealbh a choda fein do thabhairt da gach duine, ar a shon sin, ata dochus mór ag / cách, no go sguiridh an cogadh nach ttiubhrar aon tsealbh amach, sgeula an uird cuguibh, ata / Daibhi na Phrovinsial, ata Maolmuire na Phrioir a mBeul Ath hAmhnus, Domhnoll O Nún a nAr/d na Ria, Uilliam O Muilamhuill a mBeann Fhada, Serúin a mBaile an Roba, Tadhg Balloch / a Muirisg, Tadh O Conuill a nDún Mhor, Edward Bodking a nGaillibh, do bhi mise agus / Cathul Óg, a ccuidacht an Provinnsial ar visitation, a coigeadh Mumhan, la St Nicalas / do sgar me leo a bPortlairge, nior gabh an Provinnsial uaim, gan teacht do [*sic*] talamh / so, go ceann blianna no [gho *cancelled*], dhó, na dhiaigh sin cuirfigh se sgeula cugum, dhul d[on] / Spainn, bi áit reigh aguibhse dhamh, faoin am sin, do thoil De, do chuaidh Seán M[ac] / Daibhi don Róimh mur Argent [*sic*] on ord, ata Aibhistin sa Talamh Iachtroch, agus Uilliam Granna / ata an tord a dul ar aghaidh go humchuibhe, gloir do Dhia, do glacamh moran le dha / bhliain do clann daoine uaisle, [ati *cancelled*] atáid a gluasocht uile, tar fharraige, do posadh do / companoch ingean Bhaiteir mhic Teaboid, o Thorlach, do rignne caiptín do Mhaoilir / mac Bhaitéir, do dearbhratair Gearailt, na leiutenant aige, mas [fíor *above*] do Gearalt leamsa / do chuaidh an cuidachta go Carruig Fheargusa, ata an caiptín gan eisdeacht a tTorloch / na luigh, Teaboid Tath na leiutenant coreneul, Semus Dilún na caiptín, Brían / Óg Mac Donnchaidh na caiptín, agus cuidachta robhreagha aige, Lucas Táth, Frainc / Tát, na ccaiptinigh, do fuair Chriostoir bás a Lonnduin, Peadur Buidhe na brathair / St Aibhistin, agus moran eile, ata céud hurly, burly, acu nach feidir [damhsa *above*] do/ sgribadh, le [mo *cancelled*, méd *above*] mo dheibhiroch, [an *cancelled*]

ata an tathair Emunn Mac Hubeirt, a mBurdéus / agus Edward Bíata, silim gurb ann bhéus mise, ni fhacuigh aon bhrathair dom / ord o thainic me don thirse, lor so acht na failligh fein [na *above*] Brian [a *cancelled*] Ó hUiginn / gan sgribadh cugum go Burdeus ar gach aon chor, loir so mo bheannacht cuguibh uile / mur bheith nach bhfuil spás agum do sgribheoinn moran sgeulta eile cuguibh / guidhe go duthrachtoch ar bhfur ndhearbhratar bocht .i. Domhnoll Mac Suibhne

Letter II: translation

Nantes the 6 of November

1640

Father Pádraig

The Provincial, i.e. your brother Dáibhí, tasked me with writing to you. I hardly have time to write a word to you. Your relatives are well, glory be to God, except for the death of Mairghréag, i.e. your sister: you have heard of it yourself. Gearailt is in the army⁴⁶ in Carrickfergus.

When I was coming, Mairghréag Óg, Inghean Mhíle, was to marry Siúrtán Óg son of Bhaitéar Buidhe. Mairghréag daughter of Ó Gadhra has not married yet; Fearghal gained a victory over Sir Charles Coote. Conchubhar son of Cathal Óg is still a widower. The children are well and Fearghal's children. You have heard yourself that Éamonn Mac Míle is married to your sister, that is Sadhbh Inghean an Chalbhaigh.

Fearghal Dubh⁴⁷ wrote to me that yourself, Aodh Ó Conchobhair, Connla [and] Brian Ó hUiginn,⁴⁸ were safe in one convent [together]. I am remembering my service to them all.⁴⁹

The daughter of Aindreamh Ó Craoidháin has married Mathghamhain Ó hUiginn.

There is a great heated war between the Scots and the English. The plantation will not be delayed provided each is granted possession of his own holding. Despite that, everyone greatly hopes that no possession will be granted until the war ends.

News of the Order for you: Dáibhí is Provincial, Maol Muire is Prior in Ballyhaunis, Domhnall Ó Nún in Ardnaree, Uilliam Ó Muilamhuill in Banada, Searúin in Ballinrobe, Tadhg Ballach in Murrisk, Tadhg Ó Conuill in Dunmore, Edward Bodking in Galway. Cathal Óg and I accompanied the Provincial on a visitation in the province of Munster. On St Nicholas's Day⁵⁰ I parted from them in Waterford. The Provincial

46 Rendered as 'armada' in the Spanish translation of Brian Ó hUiginn. The Gearailt in question is Fr Pádraig's brother, as appears further on.

47 This confirms the recipient of Letter 1 as Fearghal Dubh, later Fr Nicolás ('Nicolas de Santa Maria' below) Ó Gadhra, one of the two translators of the letters in Seville.

48 The second translator of the letters in Spain, 'Bernardo Higgino'.

49 That is, 'remember me respectfully to them all', a borrowing from epistolary English.

50 The feast of the Augustinian, St Nicholas of Tolentino, 10 September.

would not accept that I should not come to this place for a year or two. After that he will notify me to go to Spain. Let ye have a place ready for me by that time, by the grace of God. Seán Mac Dáibhí went to Rome as an Agent from the Order. Aibhistín is in the Low Country, and Uilliam Granna. The Order is progressing adequately, glory be to God. For two years many of the sons of the nobility have been accepted. They are all travelling across the sea.

Your friend, the daughter of Bhaitéar son of Teabóid, from Turlough, was married. Maoilir son of Bhaitéar was made a captain, your brother Gearalt his lieutenant according to what Gearalt [told] me. The company went to Carrickfergus. The captain is lying lifeless in Turlough. Teabóid Taaffe is lieutenant colonel, Séamus Diolún is a captain; Brian Óg Mac Donnchaidh is a captain and he has a very fine company. Luke Taaffe [and] Frank Taaffe are captains. Christopher died in London. Peadar Buidhe⁵¹ is an Augustinian brother. And many others have a hundred hurly burlys that I cannot write about on account of my hurry.

Fr Éamonn Mac Hubeirt and Edward Biata are in Bordeaux. I think it is there I will be. I have seen no brother of my order since I came to this country.

This will do. But let neither you nor Brian Ó hUiginn neglect to write to me at Bordeaux at every opportunity. This will do. My blessing to you all. Had I space I would write much more news to you. Pray earnestly for your poor brother, i.e. Domhnall Mac Suibhne.

51 'Petrus Boy' Taaffe: *Arch. Hib.* 2 (1913), p. 35; *Arch. Hib.* 15 (1950), p. 87; *Arch. Hib.* 20 (1957), p. 114 n.1; *Collect. Hib.* 36-7 (1994-5), p. 52.

PART II: DOMHNALL MAC SUIBHNE AND
EARLY MODERN LETTER-WRITING
Éamon Ó Ciosáin

These two letters in Irish from Domhnall Mac Suibhne to Fearghal Ó Gadhra can be classified as part of the international corpus of intercepted correspondence in the early modern period.⁵² They are also an important addition to the body of letters and other documents of exchange in the Irish language in this period: letters from such as Aodh Ó Néill (Hugh O'Neill) and Róise Ní Dhochartaigh. The corpus of letters in Irish is less substantial than in languages such as Basque during the 16th and 17th centuries.⁵³ It is very likely that other letters such as these existed. Mac Suibhne's letters are in some ways typical of early modern European correspondence, but not always so.

Firstly, there is little doubt that Mac Suibhne wrote the letter, unlike many other letters at the time, whose authorship is uncertain. In this case there is no mention of any assistant and it is highly unlikely that there would have been many persons literate in the Irish language available in Nantes, from where Mac Suibhne wrote. The mixture of public and private information he conveyed is often found in early modern letters which have survived. Three main areas can be discerned in such correspondence: family information, information about political or military events and commercial information. Mac Suibhne's two texts fit this pattern (for commercial transactions, one can substitute the section where Mac Suibhne details the transmission and exchange of masses, the spiritual currency of his letter, so to speak). In addition to political news, Mac Suibhne also transmits detailed information on the network of Augustinian friaries in Ireland. The urgency of the latter part of the letter and the expectation of replies are also characteristic of personal correspondence at the time. Letters were often written in haste before the imminent sailing of a vessel which would carry the mail. Secondly, Mac Suibhne presses and chides Ó Gadhra on the issue of replies, having excused himself at the outset for his own tardiness which was due to the hope of seeing his correspondent and friend in the flesh. In the absence of the addressee in person, the letter attempts to be as close to the person as possible; this straining can

52 Some 38,000 letters in Dutch have been identified by the 'Letters as Loot' project, Leiden University. These letters were taken in captures of vessels. A number of letters in Irish were similarly intercepted. For ex., see *Calendar of State Papers Ireland, 1660–62*, pp 407–08, letter of 1661.

53 Earlier letters listed by C. Videgain, Université de Pau, France, director of the project 'The Basque language correspondence of the Dauphin 1757', letter to the authors. The Dauphin letters in Basque and French held in the Admiralty Archives, National Archives, Kew, were seized at sea and lay undiscovered until 2011. They are of a similar nature to the 1757 correspondence published by L.M. Cullen, J. Shovlin and T.M. Truxes, *The Bordeaux Dublin Letters 1757 Correspondence of an Irish Community Abroad* (Oxford, 2013).

be expressed as urging and haste, as is the case towards the end of the letter to Ó Gadhra. Both the beginning and closing of this longer letter plead for a response.

The register and orthography of Irish used by Mac Suibhne are a striking feature of these letters. He keeps to Irish throughout, except when he quotes from a letter Ó Gadhra sent to him, where the text is in English. This choice is in line with the letters of Aodh Ó Néill and Róise Ní Dhochartaigh and is therefore not unusual in Irish language correspondence. On the other hand, Ó Gadhra's use of English for some (or perhaps all, we cannot know) of his letter would not be exceptional among Irish-speaking clerics in the period.

When compared to other contemporary exchanges between Irish ecclesiastics, Mac Suibhne's are characterized by their use of Irish for all the various domains covered: personal, political/military information and the transaction. In bilingual or multilingual contexts at the time, many letters used the élite or dominant language for commercial information while personal and family matters were often treated in the vernacular language. Mac Suibhne's transmission of numbers of masses in Irish could be explained by the fact that he had until very recently operated in Gaelic-speaking Ireland, where Irish was the language of the élite who joined the order (see his statement about noble young men joining the order) and by his weak command of Latin, to which he refers. One might have expected some Latin to appear in the section concerning masses in his letter to Ó Gadhra, were it not for these factors; Latin was used by another regular of Gaelic origin in 1661 when mentioning ecclesiastical matters in a letter.⁵⁴ One can compare Mac Suibhne's monolingual usage to that in a letter sent by one Irish member of the Congregation of Charity (Vincent de Paul's congregation) to another in 1653, while both members were residing in France. This letter used three languages, according to the matters being discussed: English for personal and political information, Latin for the faculties being requested for use in Ireland and French for the details of the intermediary in Nantes to whom the letter containing the faculties was to be sent.⁵⁵ Many Irish clergy on the Continent at this time were multilingual and their writings switch languages with ease in general:⁵⁶ but Mac Suibhne had spent little time abroad and was therefore not conversant in the various working languages of the exiled Irish Catholic church, except some English, which he quotes. His language

54 See note 52.

55 Letter of Fr Edmund Barry to Fr Gerald O Brin, Richelieu, July 1653, from a miscellaneous manuscript in St Isidore's, Rome, in B. Jennings, 'Miscellaneous Documents III' in *Arch. Hib.*, 15 (1950), pp 25–26.

56 Mánuis Ó Ruairc's manuscript (written in the eighteenth century, ed. Canice Mooney, *Celtica* I, pp 1–63, online at UCDC-OFM A 24 is an example of this; *Commentarius Rinuccinianus* makes use of documentation in a range of languages, albeit translated into Latin.

use may also reflect the narrower range of languages among Irish exiles of northern Gaelic origins noted by O'Scea, in contrast to the macaronic writing of the Old English exiles and some Munster Irish exiles in their correspondence.⁵⁷

The existence of espionage letters in lesser-used languages at the time provides one element of explanation for the suspicion aroused by these letters (see below for the Spanish context of the letters). Basque had been used for this purpose in the late sixteenth century.⁵⁸ Mac Suibhne may have thought that the information he provides on the constitution of an Irish army at Carrickfergus could be safely written in Irish outside the jurisdiction of the English crown given that any interception at sea would more likely be by mariners operating in the Catholic jurisdictions of France and Spain, whose authorities might be expected to be more favourable to Catholic endeavours in Ireland. However, his letters would have provided not only cause for suspicion on the grounds of divulging military information but also a store of names for surveillance (or worse) of members of his order, his friends and relatives and Catholics more generally, had they been captured by an English ship and forwarded to the English authorities. Indeed, according to the procedural documents in Spanish which accompany the letters, they appear to have been shown to the English consul in Seville. Mac Suibhne may have thought that his choice of language and location made his gesture a low-risk one, but as it happened, it led to difficulties for his correspondent.

Irish affairs and the Augustinian order

Mac Suibhne wrote at a significant time in several regards. Firstly, the Civil Wars had broken out in Britain, leading some to hope that the threatened plantation of Connacht might be delayed, as Mac Suibhne reports. The army gathering at Carrickfergus to which he refers was a largely Catholic army which the Viceroy Strafford intended to be used to support Charles I against the Scottish Covenanters. It was assembled there from July 1640 but due to lack of funds, was billeted in various parts of Ulster.⁵⁹ This fact is not reflected in Mac Suibhne's report, which states that 10,000 men were at Carrickfergus. This was a round figure, and may no longer have been the case by the time he sailed for France.

Strafford's army was a source of worry for the English king's enemies and the New English planters in Ireland. It was ultimately disbanded in May 1641. Its remnants provided soldiers both for existing Irish regiments

57 C. O'Scea, 'In search of honour and a Catholic monarch: the assimilation and integration of an Irish minority in early modern Castile, 1601–1638', PhD, European University, Florence, 2007, pp 215–217.

58 J.B.Orpustan, 'La correspondance basque à la fin du XVIème siècle (1595–1598)' in *Fontes Linguae Vasconum*, 63 (1993), pp 177–219.

59 According to N. Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650* (Oxford, 2001), p. 296.

in France and for the constitution of new regiments there. One such new regiment was that of Christopher Bellings, brother of Richard Bellings, who was given licence specifically to recruit among the Carrickfergus army for France.⁶⁰ (Mac Suibhne did not sail to the military destinations such as the port of Dieppe in northern France but rather took the civilian and commercial route to Nantes; see below).

Secondly, he wrote in a period when the reorganization of Irish Catholic orders and secular clergy had led to a revival in numbers and also in confidence, before and during the Strafford vice-regency. Other orders such as the Franciscans were also experiencing a revival and reports from the Ulster plantation area at the end of the 1630s also indicate an increase of confidence among Catholics there. Mac Suibhne's upbeat remarks about the progress of his order and his listing of a goodly number of priories and houses would have given cause for concern to the English authorities, at a time when anti-Catholicism was again on the rise in England and Scotland.

As he states, Mac Suibhne accompanied his provincial on a visitation in 1640. The section in both letters concerning the Augustinian houses and priors resembles contemporary visitation reports for orders or secular clergy. The extensive list enumerated by Mac Suibhne is valuable in that it confirms the continuity of many of the houses founded under the patronage of prominent Anglo-Norman and Gaelic nobles in different parts of Ireland over the previous four centuries. It was assumed by local historians in Ireland, mainly following Battersby,⁶¹ that the order lost its lands and monasteries after Henry VIII's dissolution of monasteries in 1548. However, documentary evidence shows that many of its houses in the south and east were able to remain *in situ* thanks to the protection of local nobility. The Red Abbey in Cork was protected by the MacCarthys in the early years of the seventeenth century, for example; Callan priory was frequented by sons of eminent local Catholic families in the late 1620s.⁶² More recent publications by historians of the Augustinian order demonstrate its continuity in the first half of the century.⁶³ Most importantly, Mac Suibhne's evidence confirms the order's strength in Gaelic North Connacht, which dated to the fifteenth century. The house in Ballinrobe, founded in the early fourteenth century, was 'the seed from which came a new flowering of Augustinian life' at that time, as F.X. Martin wrote.⁶⁴ It was an Anglo-Norman foundation, but the order spread as Gaelic families

60 Documents in Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, Correspondance Politique Angleterre, vol 47 for 1639–40, esp. fol. 519 recto.

61 W.J. Battersby, *A History of all the Abbeys, Convents, Churches and other religious houses of the Order, particularly the Hermits of St Augustine in Ireland*, (Dublin, 1856).

62 T.C. Butler, *The Augustinians in Callan*, (Callan, 1977), p. 34.

63 F.X. Martin and C. O'Reilly, *The Irish Augustinians in Rome 1656–1994*, (Dublin/Rome, 1994).

64 F.X. Martin, 'The Augustinian Friaries in pre-Reformation Ireland' in F. Roth and N. Teeuwen (eds), *Augustiniana Septimo exacto saeculo a magna unione*, (New York, Augustinian Historical Institute, 1956), p. 357. (The author owes this reference to Diarmuid Ó Catháin.)

such as the O'Malleys promoted them in Connacht. Martin lists the foundation of eight subsequent houses in Connacht; in due course members of prominent Gaelic families became superiors and provincials. These houses survived the suppression of the monasteries, as many of them were outside the reach of English government officials in the late sixteenth century; one house, that in Dunmore, was exempted from closure by the Lord Deputy.⁶⁵ The order's strength lay in its relatively dense network of friaries in this region from the fifteenth century onwards, and this is reflected in Mac Suibhne's letters. Of the pre-Reformation houses listed by Martin,⁶⁶ Burriscarra (Co. Mayo) and Scurmore (Co. Sligo) are not mentioned in the present letters, but Mac Suibhne mentions a further house in Príosún (near Manulla, Co. Mayo), under the leadership of Tadhg Ballach.

A resurgent Irish province thus held many of its historic bases by the time of the 1640 visitation. Chapters had been held since 1630 and would continue until 1649, according to the order's Roman archive. Indeed a chapter had been held in Ballyhaunis in the same year as Mac Suibhne's departure for France.⁶⁷ In the following year, Protestants in the area complained that 'the friars swarm *hic et illic* and are often to be met with on the highways in their habits. In Dunmore is a house consisting of a prior and thirty friars which have their oratory, dormitory, refectory &c and observe the Rites of their Order as fully as when they were in Spain'.⁶⁸ This house is most likely to have been the Augustinian convent, and was taken to be such by F.X. Martin.⁶⁹ Even allowing for some partisan exaggeration in this report, it is clear that recruitment was healthy at this time and that the order had houses, whether they were recent acquisitions or the convents they had held prior to the sixteenth-century dissolution.

Mac Suibhne's letters provide details of names that can be added to lists of titular priors in the seventeenth century,⁷⁰ they also add to biographical knowledge of individual members.⁷¹ Ardnaree is given attention in the letters, as it was the convent where Fearghal Dubh entered the order, as is mentioned in his interrogation by the Regent.⁷² Tadhg Ballach, who is

65 Calendar of Carew Papers, 1601–03, p. 474, quoted by Martin, 'The Augustinian Friaries'.

66 Martin, 'The Augustinian Friaries in pre-Reformation Ireland', p. 357.

67 Martin and O'Reilly, *The Irish Augustinians in Rome 1656–1994*, p. 62 and p. 9, quoting Archivium Generale Augustinianorum, Rome, Dd 76, f. 42 v.

68 O.J. Burke, *History of the Catholic Archbishops of Tuam*, (Dublin, 1882), p. 125, quoting a 'Remonstrance of Grievance in the Province of Tuam, June 1641, Ms in Record Office'.

69 Martin and O'Reilly, *The Irish Augustinians in Rome*, p. 9.

70 Thus, Henry Mac Gibbúin can be added for 1640 in the list beginning with 1649 given in J.K. Clarke, 'The Augustinian Friary Naas' in *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society*, 14, 3 (1968), p. 338; Mac Mathghamhna in Cork, to be added to the account of the 1630s and 1640s in T.C. Butler, *The Augustinians in Cork 1280–1985*, (Cork, 1986), pp 23–24.

71 For example, Tadhg Ó Conaill and Aibhistín Ó hUiginn, both mentioned in the letters, and Archbishop Malachy O'Queely were killed by Scots troops near Sligo in 1645.

72 'Arneyensis' is most likely a Latinate deformation of the placename as heard by Spanish ears, see the *informacion*, in contribution by O'Scea, note 82.

mentioned in connection with the house at Príosún, was also attached to the friary at Murrisk, perhaps indicating that the former house was an offshoot of the latter.

Foreign destinations of Irish migrants

Nantes had been a relatively minor destination for Irish civilian migration before 1640 in comparison to other ports and towns in Brittany. The number of families noted in parish archives was small and only one Irish merchant was naturalized in the city itself during the first forty years of the century. A number of poor or traveling Irish migrants and their children died in the Hôtel-Dieu, a hospice for the poor in the period. This trickle reflects maritime traffic between Nantes and Ireland. However, no mention of any religious bearing a name resembling Mac Suibhne occurs in the parish or hospice registers for the city around the time of his arrival. His lack of Latin (the *lingua franca* of communication between newly arrived Irish and local French clergy) would have made it less likely that he would appear as a source of information or a witness in such records. It is equally difficult to know how long he stayed in Nantes. His arrival does, however, come very shortly before the first arrivals of merchants and some other civilians from the ports of Waterford and Limerick in the decade of the 1640s; these would stay in Nantes for extended periods of time. A favourable attitude to Catholic exiles from Ireland, both clerical and lay, had developed in Nantes around that time, due in no small measure to the initiative of Bishop Gabriel de Beauvau, bishop of Nantes diocese from 1635 to 1667, whom Irish clergy thanked specifically.⁷³ Mac Suibhne's letters do not mention the precise location where he stayed, but he states that he had met no member of his order in Nantes. It follows that he was not lodged in either the order's convent in the centre of the city or in the priory of La Magdelaine de Geneston in Montbert, not far to the south of the city, which was a well-known Augustinian centre. The reasons for this are not stated, but Mac Suibhne refers to the expense of living in Nantes, a cost which the local convents obviously did not bear. This would appear to contrast to the accommodation given to Irish Capuchins in La Rochelle's Capuchin house, which is mentioned in the *Commentarius Rinuccinianus*.

Bordeaux was Mac Suibhne's next destination. According to Letter I, he was to remain there for three years and then possibly go to Spain. He may have gone to Bordeaux. There is no trace of him in the published records of the Irish college in existence there since 1603 or in the published inventories of diocesan and departmental archives. It might be considered unlikely that a member of an order would reside or be attached to a

73 For contextual material on de Beauvau and Nantes, see É. Ó Ciosáin, 'Irish Nuns in Nantes, 1650–59' in *Arch. Hib.*, 58 (2004), pp 167–173; 'A pamphlet in French on the banishment of Catholic clergy from Ireland in 1653' in *Arch. Hib.*, 65 (2012), pp 209–221.

secular college at that time, as a rule. However, as a list of clergy connected with the college, printed there in 1619, shows, Bordeaux's Irish college did shelter members of congregations in the first sixteen years of its existence, albeit during years of crisis for the Irish Catholic church.⁷⁴ A Daniel Swiny appears in the list of priests who were naturalized in 1654 when Bordeaux Irish college was granted letters patent by Anne of Austria.⁷⁵ As this college was a secular college, and given the number of bearers of various Gallicised forms of the Mac Suibhne name in France, many of them being from Munster, there are no compelling reasons to believe that Domhnall the Augustinian and Father Daniel Swiny are the same person. Mac Suibhne may not even have frequented the Irish college, if he stayed in Bordeaux. It would be usual for Irish members of orders and indeed secular priests to study or reside in local French colleges; members of the Irish seminaries often took classes outside their alma mater. Therefore research remains to be done in various jurisdictions in order to discover Mac Suibhne's further career and fate.

74 'Catalogue de quelques clerics ecclésiastiques Hibernois...', Bordeaux, 1619, reprinted in *CSP Ireland 1615-25*, pp 318-22 and by D. O'Donoghue, 'The Congregation of Irish priests in Bordeaux' in *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, 5 (Jan. to June 1899), pp 515-20.

75 T.J. Walsh, 'Some records of the Irish College at Bordeaux' in *Arch. Hib.*, 15 (1950), p. 136, quoting Archives Départementales de la Gironde, G 886, documents concerning the Irish college; also mentioned in T.J. Walsh, *The Irish Continental College Movement*, (Cork/Dublin, 1973), p. 98.

PART III: THE SPANISH CONTEXT OF THE LETTERS
Ciaran O'Scea

Surviving manuscripts or correspondence in the Irish language in Continental European archives of the early-modern period are relatively infrequent, notwithstanding the very substantial Irish emigration to Europe, especially to France and the Iberian Peninsula, prior to 1800.⁷⁶ In the case of Spain this was partly due to the suspicions of religious heterodoxy created by any correspondence not written in the canon of the Romance languages or in those of the transmission of the sacred Biblical texts.⁷⁷ Even the most important Spanish archive for the early-modern period, the Archivo General de Simancas contains less than a half-dozen letters in Irish, and references to about the same number again but whose contents only exist in translation.⁷⁸

Although considerable epistolary correspondence, written in Irish, appears to have taken place between Irish religious on the Continent and Ireland, little has survived.⁷⁹ A significant exception to this rule were two letters, penned in Nantes in France by Domhnall Mac Suibhne in late 1640 to two fellow Irish Augustinians resident in Seville and Alcalá de Henares in Spain.

Only thanks to the fortunes of war did these letters end up in a Spanish archive, or more concretely owing to the interception by a Spanish privateer of a Spain-bound ship off the coast of Western France in late

76 On Irish emigration to Spain and its dominions see Óscar Recio Morales, *El socorro de Irlanda en 1601 y la contribución del ejército a la integración social de los irlandeses en España* (Madrid, 2002), pp 109–47; Ciaran O'Scea, 'Irish emigration to Castile in the opening years of the seventeenth century', in P.J. Duffy and Gerard Moran (eds), *To and from Ireland: Planned Migration Schemes c. 1600–2000* (Dublin, 2004), pp 17–37; Igor Pérez Tostado, *Irish Influence at the Court of Spain in the seventeenth century* (Dublin, 2008), pp 22–39; Óscar Recio Morales, *Ireland and the Spanish Empire, 1600–1825* (Dublin, 2010); on the pre-1601 period see Enrique García Hernán, *Irlanda y el rey prudente* (2 vols, Madrid, 2000, 2003); on Irish emigration to France and other European countries see Éamon Ó Ciosáin, 'A Hundred Years of Irish Emigration to France, 1590–1688', in Thomas O'Connor (ed.), *The Irish in Europe, 1580–1815* (Dublin, 2001), pp 93–106; Éamon Ó Ciosáin, 'Regrouping in Exile: Irish communities in Western France in the Seventeenth Century' in Tadhg Ó hAnnracháin and Robert Armstrong (eds), *Community in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2006), pp 133–53; Mary Ann Lyons, *French-Irish Relations, 1500–1610. Politics, Migration, and Trade*. (Woodbridge, 2003); Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Irish Migrants in Europe after Kinsale, 1602–1820* (Dublin, 2003); Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (eds), *Irish communities in early modern Europe* (Dublin, 2006).

77 Ciaran O'Scea, 'En Busca de Papeles: la transformación de la cultura oral de los inmigrantes irlandeses desde La Coruña hasta la Corte' in Enrique García Hernán, Miguel Ángel de Bunes, Óscar Recio Morales, and B.J. García García (eds), *Irlanda y la monarquía hispánica: Kinsale 1601–2001. Guerra, política, exilio y religión* (Madrid, 2002), p. 363

78 *Ibid.*, p. 371.

79 Benignus Millett, *The Irish Franciscans 1651–1665* (Rome, 1964), pp 382–83.

November or early December 1640.⁸⁰ The corsair ship's captain, evidently unfamiliar with Gaelic script, presumed that the letters were written in some secret cipher and handed them over to royal authorities in Pasajes in the Basque Country who duly forwarded them to one of the secretaries of the Council of War. By early January 1641 the investigation of the case had been entrusted to the Regent of the Real Audiencia de Sevilla within whose jurisdiction the addressee of one of the letters, the Augustinian friar Nicolás de Santa María (Fearghal Dubh Ó Gadhra) resided.⁸¹

The Regent evidently considered the case to be of some importance as he personally supervised the interrogation of the arrested Irish friar. In an evidently pre-determined manner, Fearghal was first questioned about his origins, how long he had lived in Seville, and whether he had had received any correspondence from outside of Spain.⁸² He was then asked to identify the writing on the outside of the envelope after which he was shown the enclosed letters and was requested to do the same for the script and the signature of the author. Once having confirmed these, the friar was then instructed to provide a Spanish translation of the longer of the two letters (Letter I). Finally, the interrogation terminated after he had given a summary of the second letter.⁸³

It would appear that only at this point did the Regent realise that the letters were not in cipher, and that he would need to find a translator for them.⁸⁴ However, this turned out to be more difficult than he had envisaged as he drew a blank from the Spanish Jesuit college and the Spanish Inquisition. Then, presumably, on the assumption that Fearghal was a subject of the king of England the Regent tried the English consul in Seville, who also was unable to read the letters. Only at this point does the Regent appear to have considered the city's Irish seminary, which then presumably offered one of their students, Bernard Ó hUiginn to act as a

80 The documentation gives little detail on the boat or its cargo other than where it was captured. Archivo General de Simancas, Guerra y Marina, legajo 3203, Alonso de Idiaquez to Pedro Coloma, 13 December 1640.

81 Under the Spanish monarchy the justice system was divided into a number of regional courts (*audiencias*), two supreme courts (*Real Chancillería de Valladolid*, *Real Chancillería de Granada*), and finally the Council of Castile at court. The Regent was the highest authority in the *Audiencia de Sevilla*. See Paulo Arias Temprado to Pedro Coloma, 14 January 1641 (AGS, GYM, leg. 3203).

82 In his reply Fearghal stated that he was from Sesumaresgara in the diocese of Killala, that he entered the Augustinian order in the convent of Arneyensis in Ireland, and that he had been resident in Seville for about three years. He furthermore affirmed that he only ever corresponded with people in Ireland but that he had not received any letters in over a year (AGS, GYM, leg. 3203, concerning an información, 20 Jan. 1641).

83 Ibid.

84 The interrogation of Fearghal Ó Gadhra and a sworn translation by an Irish priest confirming that the letters were written in Irish were dated to the same day in the extant notarial deed. It is highly likely that this date only represents the date on which the interrogation was completed, and not the actual dates of the interrogation (AGS, GYM, leg. 3203, información, 20 Jan. 1641).

translator of the letters.⁸⁵ In like manner to Fearghal Ó Gadhra, this Irish student was asked to identify the script and the signature after which he was ordered to give a brief Spanish translation of the shorter letter (Letter II) and a summary of Letter I.

Having heard the two translations, the Regent concluded that the letters ‘were not in cipher but were written in the original old written language of Ireland, which was not commonly understood among the Irish as they normally used spoken and written English on the island. It contains only news of individual marriages and deaths of his homeland and of appointments of members of his religious order written by a religious, who went to France to study arts, to two other religious, one of whom lives here and the other in Alcala de Henares. I have found no other persons here that can understand it, though I have detained them while waiting for a member of the order of St. Francis who is outside this city and who will have to come back here. Without doubt there would be persons in this court who could corroborate the matter, and to me it seems from the manner and appearance of those who read them to me that there is no more to them than what they say. In order to be more certain, one could search for other Irish there who are presently in the Irish college of San Joachen [Jorge] or in other religious orders.’⁸⁶

Nevertheless, question marks still remained regarding the reliability of the translations as the Council of war also endorsed the Regent’s opinion and recommended that more competent or trustworthy persons should be sought at court.⁸⁷ Evidently, the Regent’s doubts in the matter were influenced by his impression that Irish was neither spoken nor written in Ireland. One can safely presume that his principal and maybe exclusive source of information in this regard derived from the city’s Old English run Irish Jesuit college.⁸⁸ Certainly, at no stage during the interrogation

85 AGS, GYM, leg. 3203, note of notary at end of official translation of letter II, 28 Jan. 1641.

86 ‘Que no son de cifra sino de lengua y letra antigua y originaria de Yrlanda la qual no es entendida comunmente aun de los irlandeses por hablarse y escribirse generalmente en aquella isla la inglesa. Contienen solo nuevas de particulares muertes y casamientos de su patria y de elecciones de su religion escritas por un religioso que passo a Francia a estudiar artes a otros dos religiosos que el uno reside aqui, el otro en Alcala de Henares. No he hallados aqui mas personas que lo entiendan aunque los he detenido esperando a un religioso de San Francisco que esta fuera de esta ciudad y abra de venir a ella. Mas [seguro] que en esta corte avra personas con quien asegurar esta diligencia y a mi en la forma y semblanza de los que me han leydo me parece que no tienen mas fondo de lo que dicen. Mas siempre seria mas seguro hacer que ay se busquen algunos irlandeses que aora en el colegio de irlandeses de san Joachen o en otras religiones’. (Paulo Arias Temprado to Pedro Coloma, 21 Feb., 1641 (AGS, GYM, leg. 3203).

87 Ibid.

88 The limited capacity of the Old English Jesuits to preach in Irish in Ireland was a bone of contention between Irish Jesuits and Irish Franciscans in Europe during the first half of the seventeenth century. For further examples of the negative attitudes of the Old English Jesuits towards the Irish language see Russell Library Maynooth, Salamanca Archives, S. 52/9/15, respuesta a la carta de Florence Conry (Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire).

of Fearghal Ó Gadhra or Bernard Ó hUiginn's oral translations, were any references made to the language of the letters other than the fact they were written in a foreign language. Presumably, the Regent's acquired knowledge regarding the Irish identification of the letters came via exchanges with the two Irish religious that were not transcribed by the notary. Finally, sometime in late February 1641 Fearghal Ó Gadhra was released from prison.⁸⁹

The Spanish Translations of the letters

Leaving aside a number of omissions, additions, and mistakes, the Spanish translations carried out by the two Irish religious were by and large very accurate. A striking feature of the translation carried out by Fearghal Ó Gadhra under interrogation was the omission of all the genealogical data that comprised substantial parts of Letter I, perhaps due to the fact that markers of genealogical descent (i.e. Tadhg mcHugh mcDavid O'Driscoll) would have appeared to Spanish royal authorities too much like the chains of genealogical descent that so exemplified Moorish or Morisco anthroponomical practices, and so therefore could give rise to a questioning of the religious orthodoxy of Irish clerics. For the same reason the use of Gaelic script in Irish signatures or that of the two-generation or three-generation genealogical descents, which are so often found in official English sources such as the fiants, were noticeably absent from Irish anthroponomical and scribal practices in Spain.⁹⁰

On the other hand, the more formal translations carried out by Ó hUiginn were much closer to the originals and included all the genealogical data. Nonetheless, this translator may also have been responsible for some misreadings: Sir Charles Coote becomes Sir Lucas Coote in the Spanish version, and *maille moran eile duaislibh na conndae* became 'along with many more of the nobility of Connacht' (Letter I). Even between translators differences occurred. Thus, *Semus Talboid a mBaile Ath Cliath, Foord Galta /a nDroighud Atha* (Letter 1), which was translated correctly by Bernard Ó hUiginn was transformed into 'the reverend friar James in the city of Dublin. The English prior of Breda' in Ó Gadhra's Spanish version.⁹¹ It is not clear how these misreadings occurred or whether it was a case of the notary writing down what he thought he had heard.

Other terms such as those relating to Irish kinship or to more particularly

89 Paulo Arias Temprado to Pedro Coloma, 21 Feb. 1641 (AGS, GYM, leg. 3203).

90 AGS, GYM, leg. 3203, informacion, 20 Jan. 1641; for examples of Arabic or Moorish anthroponomical practice among Spanish Moriscos see Gonzalo Carrasco García, 'La onomástica de la conversión: señas de identidad y transformación antroponímica de los moriscos de Granada (1500–1569)', in *Sharq al-Andalus*, 19 (2008–10), pp 149–50; Ciaran O'Scea, 'Nominación de los irlandeses en España, rechazo y asimilación (1600–1680)' in Gregorio Salinero and Isabel Testón Núñez (eds), *Nombres, un juego de engaños. Nominación, movilidad, y antroponimia, siglos XV–XVIII* (Madrid, 2010), p. 126.

91 AGS, GYM, leg. 3203, información, 20 Jan. 1641.

Irish concepts were sometimes translated in a looser manner or not translated at all. The term *clann* was translated by both Ó hUiginn and Ó Gadhra in the phrase *Luanosa do sgarus le Mairgreig, do chuir a beannnocht cugad, ataid slan uile, an clann* (Letter I) using the Spanish term ‘hermanos’, implying the community of brothers that so characterised Gaelic Ireland. On other occasions, it was translated by Ó hUiginn as ‘children’ or ‘offspring’ in the sense of the nuclear family of an Irish lord as in *ata an clann slan, agus clann Fhearguil* (Letter 2). In the latter case this may have been deliberate so as to avoid giving any impression of tribal affiliations. The word *muintir* was consistently translated in both letters as a ‘group of friends’, and not in terms of its other meanings of a community, wider kin or people. Ó hUiginn in his official translation of the second letter translated *do cuailuis fein go bhfuil Emunn Mac Mile posda, le do dheirbhsiair .i. Sábh Ingean a Chalbhaigh* (Letter II) as ‘Your Reverence will have heard that the sister of Your Reverence Doña Sabina has got married to Sir Edmund McMili’, thus omitting Sadhbh’s patronymic.

Other words were omitted totally from the translations. *Uasal* was translated when it meant a noble (Letter II) but omitted as an adjective defining a person (Letter I). Similarly, *companach* as in *do posadh do companoch ingean Bhaiteir mhic Teaboid, o Thorlach* (Letter II) was omitted from the Spanish version, as was the entire phrase *oganoch eile as Muinteir Eoluis an Ard na Ria* (Letter I). Only twice did Irish words or phrases find their way into the Spanish translation, most noticeably in the sentence *ata Mathgamhuin O hUiginn posta le hinghein Aindreamh Ui Chraoidhain, 5 céud punta an spreth ar aon clar amhain* (Letter II), which in the Spanish version maintained *ar aon clar amhain* at the end of the Spanish sentence. Presumably, in this case Bernard Ó hUiginn spelt it out in Spanish to the notary.

In contrast, Farrell Ó Gadhra added details to his translations, based on his own intimate knowledge of the Augustinian order, that were not in the originals. This can be seen in his distinctions between those who had taken their vows and those who had only finished their studies.

Overall, despite the accuracy of the greater part of the translation of the two letters, there appear to have been deliberate attempts on the part of Bernard Ó hUiginn to dilute Irish kinship terms in order to make them more acceptable and understandable to Spanish royal authorities, most likely to avoid any socio-cultural or religious manifestations that would see the Irish classified as among or along with Spain’s religiously deviant populations.⁹² Moreover, this tendency and the omission by Fearghal Ó Gadhra of all genealogical data in his own translation may have been noted by the Regent, and thus might explain why he recommended that a more trustworthy translation be done at court.

92 On the similarities between the Gaelic Irish agnatic system and the agnatic model of the converted Moors or Moriscos see Ciaran O’Scea, *Surviving Kinsale: Irish emigration and identity formation in early modern Spain, 1601–40* (Manchester, 2015), ch. 10.

Finally, the translations of these letters and a comparison of the different versions give valuable insights into the process of early-modern translating, though leaving many questions unanswered as to the nature of the interaction between the various parties or to the relationship between the oral interpretation of the written word, its re-composition, and conscious or unconscious acts of omission or censorship.

Transcription of the interrogation of Fearghal Dubh Ó Gadhra (Fray Nicolás de Santa María) and Bernard Ó hUiginn.⁹³

Señor

En la ciudad de Sevilla veinte de henero de mil y seiscientos y quarenta y un años el señor Don Paulo Arias Temprado del consejo de Su Magestad y su Regente en la Real Audiencia de sta ciudad hizo parezere ante su mandado al Padre Fray Nicolas de Santa Maria que asi se nombro y dixo ser religioso de la orden de San Agustin y de el se rezibio juramento en forma de derecho y prometo de desir la verdad y le fueron fechas las siguientes.⁹⁴

Preguntado como se llama y de donde es natural, dixo que como a dicho se llama Fray Nicolas de Santa Maria y que es religioso de la orden de señor San Agustin y que es natural del reyno de Yrlanda en la villa de Sesumareejaray obispado Aladense y esto es el p[?...] .⁹⁵

Preguntado de a donde es conbentual y lo a sido y quanto tiempo a que esta en esta ciudad y de a donde vino y que correspondençia tiene con que personas y en que partes. Dixo que q sido conbentual del convento de Arneyenzes del dicho reyno de Yrlanda y que a que vino a estos rreynos de España a esta ciudad de Sevilla puede aver tres años poco mas o menos, y que no tiene correspondençias fuera de estos rreynos sino es en su tierra de a donde abra un año poco mas o menos que no a rezibido cartas.⁹⁶

93 The translation from Spanish to English of the interrogation has been limited to the preliminary sections. Those parts of the interrogation that were translations of the original letters by Fearghal Ó Gadhra and Brian Ó hUiginn have not been translated.

94 In the city of Seville on the twentieth of January of 1641, his lordship Don Paulo Arias Temprado, member of his Majesty's Royal Council and his Regent in the Real Audiencia of this city had the said named Father Friar Nicolas de Santa Maria, who says he is a religious of the Order of St. Augustine, appear on his orders before him, and he swore an oath according to law, promising to tell the truth, and the following questions were put to him.

95 Asked what was his name, and where was he from, he said as he has stated that he is called Friar Nicolas de Santa Maria, and that he is a religious of the Order of lord St Augustine. He is a native of the kingdom of Ireland from the town of Sesumareejaray in the bishopric of Killala. And this is the[corrupt].

96 Asked where he was or where he has been a conventual friar, how long he has been in this city, from where had he come, and what correspondence he had had with others and whereabouts, he replied that he had been a conventual friar in the convent of Arneyenzes in the said kingdom of Ireland, that he had come to these kingdoms of Spain to the city of Seville about three years ago more or less, and that he has not had correspondence outside of these kingdoms except with his homeland from which he has not received any letters in about a year.

E luego el dicho señor Regente le mostro un sobre escrito de una carta y que la dicha carta pareze esta escrita en lengua estranjera y el sobreescrito en castellano que dice a el Padre Fray Nicolas de Santa Maria de la orden de nuestro santo padre San Agustin que guarde Nuestro Señor en Sevilla, y abiendolo visto dixo que no conose la letra del dicho sobreescrito ni save de quien sea.⁹⁷

Y luego el dicho señor Regente le mostro lo ynterior de la dicha carta y letra y firma de ella. Y aviendola visto, dixo que la letra de la dicha carta y forma es del Padre Fray Daniel Mo Soyne frayle professo y sacerdote de la dicha rreligion de señor San Agustin que fue su compañero en el convento de Yrlanda y que la fecha de la dicha carta es escrita de Nantes del reyno de Françia su fecha de seys de noviembre del año de mill y seiscientos y quarenta. Y luego el dicho señor Regente mando a el dicho Padre Fray Nicolas le diga y declare en castellano lo que contiene la dicha carta el qual dixo que a su leal saver y entender la dicha carta contiene lo siguiente.⁹⁸

Resivi su carta de este año y la falta de correspondençia no a sido de poca amistad y amor la tarda correspondençia sino que esperaba cada dia tomar mi biaje para España pero despues Dios quiso que me fuy a Françia y mañana va el navio a España y por eso escribo corto lo que ay de nuevo en Yrlanda las cruales guerras que ay entre los escoseses y ynglezes y los escozезes tomaron dos lugares que la una se llama Castillo Nuevo y el otro no me acuerdo. Ay mill yrlandeses en campo en la ciudad de Carrigeargus (Carrigfergus) . Don Carlos Cut es coronel y Don Teobaldo Tas sargento mayor, Don Bernardo I Donxo capitan, Gualtero Suyne alférez y muchos otros. Dos hijos del Conde Taf son capitanes el uno se llama Don Lucas y otro Don Francisco, el otro murio en Londres. Don Milero Suyne murio y mi madre y otra Doña Maria Suyne, y tambien Doña Zara Zojun casada con Do Guillermo Tule. Doña Margarita no esta casada y Don Olibero y su hermana tampoco. Don Fergueael O Gara gano el pleyto contra Don Carlo Cut, y el virrey dize que a de quitar una media de [el] pais en[tero] en la plantaçion. Cada uno save lo que tiene de la plantaçion. No puede

97 Then the said lord Regent showed him an envelope with a superscription of a letter on it, and that the said letter appeared to be written in a foreign language with the superscription in Spanish that read 'to Father Friar Nicolas de Santa Maria of the Order of our holy father St. Augustine in Seville, may Our Lord protect him'. And having seen it, he stated that he did not recognise the writing of the said superscription nor did he know whose it was.

98 Then the said lord Regent showed him the contents of the said letter, the handwriting and the signature on it. And having seen it, he stated that the handwriting of the said letter and the signature belonged to Father Friar Daniel Mo Soyne, professed friar and priest of the said order of lord St. Francis who was his fellow companion in the convent in Ireland, and that the said letter was dated and written in Nantes in the kingdom of France, dated on the sixth of November of the year 1640. And then the said lord Regent ordered the said Father Friar Nicolas to state and declare in Spanish what the letter contained, who faithfully and to the best of his knowledge said that the letter contained the following.

tardar Dios, sobretodo lo que espero[es] que no pueden acabar esto hasta que se acaven primero las guerras de Escocia y Ynglaterra, pero con todo eso acabose sino solamente que no dieran posesiones.

Doña Brigida era casada con Don Tadeo Conor, y tambien Don Daniel era casado con Doña Maria Conor sin licencia de sus parientes. Don Mateo Huagicens esta casado con la hija de Don Andres Crian. Dieron por dote quinientos libras de plata moneda de Ynglaterra. Tambien los demas de sus amigos quedan con salud y su madre y a vuestra exçelencia embia rrecaudos dos y lienso y me pesa que no puede enbiar por que a mi no me falta y a vuestra exçelencia si, lo que va y que puede enbiar es el papel.

Me acuerdo que su reberencia a escrito que embiara algunas misas dichas con aplicacion de su yntencion, le a hablado con cierto padre del convento y otros clerigos y alli van tantas y lo que vuestra exçelencia a escrito de otras neçesidades me peso mucho y tambien me a pesado mucho del Padre Fray Dioniçio que a escrito a otros frayles en España, y a vuestra exçelencia. Yo no tengo desbiar ningun recuerdo a el Padre Fray Arturo ni a el Padre Fray Felipe.

Alli van las nuevas de la orden primeramente el Padre Fray Dabid es Provincial; el Padre Milero, Prior en el convento de Belazamus (Ballyhaunis); el Padre Fray Daniel, Prior del convento de Arnaçençioñ (Ardnaree) y el Padre Fray Guillermo, Prior en el convento de Benercadençia (Banada); el Padre Fray Diego en el convento de Benerovas (Ballinrobe); el Padre Fray Tadeo en el convento de Carcel; el Padre Tadeo en el convento de Durmor (Dunmore); el Padre Fray Eduardo en el convento de Galvia (Galway). Yo y el Padre Fray Carlo acompañamos a el Padre Provincial en la visita de la provincia de Momonia, y estos son los priores de alla, primo el Padre Fray Jacobo, Prior de la ciudad de Corques (Cork); el Padre Fray Miguel Zarçel en la ciudad de Lembrique (Limerick); el Padre Fray Ricardo Tobin en Tobredaro (Tipperary); Hijo de Teneque, Prior de Fiardas (Fethard); el Padre Edmundo Tobin en la ciudad de Gunbarna (Dungarvan); el Padre Fray Miguel Baron en la ciudad de Portaria (Waterford); el Padre Fray Martin Porçel en Calun (Callan); el Padre Fray Dioniçio O Quinebe a Rrus (Ross) Maquireen; el Padre Fray Enrique en Maquimonmasleyque (Naas); el Padre Fray Diego en la ciudad de [D]ublino (Dublin); el yngles, Prior de Breda. (Drogheda) Y esto es el çitio y la dispu[si]cion de la orden que ban adelante rraçonablemente con la voluntad de Dios.

El Padre Fray Juan se fue a Rroma como procurador; el Padre Fray Agustin en Flandes; y los noviçios que tomaron abito an profesado todos en el convento de Arnarey (Ardnaree): el hijo de Don Hugo que se llama Felemeo tomo abito; Gull[i]ermo O Maher⁹⁹ de Motioles y despues Eneas en el convento de Lahamus (Ballyhaunis) y todos son profesos y los que reçiven adelante no se.

99 The word 'fray' crossed out.

Y a otros muchos nuevas que por no ser de ymportançia no las escribo, y que tengo mucha priesa.

Y sobre las missas alli van a el Padre Fray [E]ugenio O Conon, çiento y veynte missas; a el Padre Fray Comarco, quarenta; a el Padre Fray Eugenio, sesenta; del Padre Fray Paulo, veynte quatro; el licenciado Edmundo Xara, quarenta; el licenciado Ardalfo Quinay, veynte y quatro; del Padre Carbrigio Egano, doze; otro Carbrigio, doze; de el licenciado Dionição Migile, doze; del Padre Fray Rogerio, doze; del Padre Cornelio, doze; del licenciado Juan Macdoge, seys; y en todos pienso que son treçientos y [setenta y cinco). Por mi parte no e de enbiar a vuestra excelencia nada hasta que vuestra excelencia me embie la rrespuesta a este reyno y en la çuidad de Burdeos pero con todo esso si faltara van por mi quenta çien missas. Suplico a vuestra reberençia [e]scrivirme a Burdeos todas las cossas buenas y malas. Tres semanas a que este en la tierra Françia. El Provincial me mando estudiar aqui artes y despues caminar a España a estudiar teologia. No e visto ningun frayle de la orden y no lo se todavia ni estoy sierto a donde me envarian por conventual. Vuestra rreverençia puede escribir a Burdeos por que alli espero quedarme si a vuestra reverençia faltan algunas missas. Tengo carta o orden del Provincial que tambien le enbiare. Mas el Padre Fray Carlos y Olivero estan muy enoxados con vuestra reberençia por que no a escrito a ellos de su biaje y salud. Como yo savia poco latin enviaron me a Françia a estudiar antes por tres años, y vuestra reverençia me haga el favor de tenerme alla buen lugar que por mi consençia [conciencia] que tengo plata y oro todavia aunque se gasta mucho cada dia, y lo se que a el Padre Fray Arturo y a el Padre Fray Felipe no les faltan nada. El Padre Provinçial me ordeno servir a el Padre Fray Patriçio, y no se el convento donde bive ni la ciudad, y si lo supiera no tengo lugar para escribirle.

La postrera noche del mes de jullio le hable a Doña Margarita y envia a vuestra reberençia muchos rrecaudos y estan con salud con sus hermanos y los demas en ausençia quiere mucho. Vasta y yo con mucha priessa y vuestra reverençia save y yo enbiare a vuestra reverençia estas camissas y muchas otras mas de mi parte. Pesame como no fuy a España que traje algunos liensos o camisas y questan mucho los portes, y el lienso de Yrlanda esta aqui muy barato mas que en Yrlanda. A los demas yrlandeses que biven por alla vezo las manos y a vuestra exçelencia especialmente. Vuestra excelencia encomiende a mi madre a Dios.

El Padre Fray Milero a de escribir a vuestra reverençia. Quedese con Dios. Dios guarde a vuestra reberençia, y si vuestra reverençia no me escribe a Burdeos se podre dezir que es mal amigo. Alli va el papel de los que enbiaron a vuestra exçelencia las missas. Vuestro pobre hermano Fray Daniel Basenan. Nantes a seys de noviembre de mill y seyscientos y quarenta años. No se olvide vuestra reverençia de poner el sobreescrito en romanze a el Padre Fray Patriçio.

Y luego el señor Regente le mostro al dicho Fray Nicolas otra carta de la dicha lengua

y letra sin sobreescrito que le mando con la carta que sea trasladado y le mando que diga y declare lo que contiene la dicha carta en castellano. Y el dicho padre dixo que la dicha carta es de la misma letra y firma del dicho Padre Fray Daniel y de la misma fecha que la otra, y que parece es escrito a el Padre Fray Patriçio de San Agustin que esta en el convento de San Agustin de la villa de Alcalá de Henares donde le da cuenta de lo que su hermano es Provincial que se llama Fray Dabid, y que su hermano Geraldo es sargento dandole nuevas de algunos casamientos de parientes y amigos y proviçiones de prioratos que a avido en la dicha orden en Yrlanda. Y esto es lo que escribe de lo que se le a preguntado, y es la verdad para el testigo que hizo y lo firmo de su nombre y el dicho señor Regente.

Fr. Nicolas de S.ta Maria

E luego entre dicho dia el dicho señor Regente hizo parecer ante si a Don Bernardo Hijino que asi se nombro presbitero y colegial del colegio de los yrlandeses de esta ciudad en la Calle del Lagar Vomjera y de el rrezibio juramento y el susdicho lo hizo en forma de derecho y prometio de dezir la verdad y aviendosele mostrado una de las dichas cartas que esta en una plana de papel y a el prinçipio y dize Nantes seys noviembre de mill seyscientos y quarenta, y esta escrito en lengua estranjera, que esta sin sobreescrito. Y aviendola visto dixo que la dicha carta esta escrita en letra yrlandesa y con una firma que dize Daniel Suned y que aviendola leydo, halla por ella que el dicho Daniel la escribe a su parecer a San Patriçio de San Agustin y que es un rreligioso yrlandes que es conbentual de Alcalá de Henares estudiando cienza que es teologia lo que estudia el qual es hermano segun a oido desir publicamente del Padre Provincial de la orden de San Agustin de la yslandia de Yrlanda. Y en ella le dize que su hermano el Provincial llamado Fray Dabid le encargo que viera al dicho Fray Patriçio y apenas tiene lugar de escribirle una palabra. Sus amigos quedan con salud gloria a Dios, solamente la muerte de su hermana Margarita de la que ya tendra nota antes. Geraldo esta en la armada y es Carrigeférez, y que quando estava para partirze de Yrlanda quedava para casarse Doña Margarita con Fulano Jordan, hijo de Gualtero, y otras cosas tocantes a nuevas de personas particulares de la dicha yslandia de Yrlanda y de oficios de priores y de otras proviçiones de la orden de San Agustin y de las guerras que se trabavan entre escoçia y Ynglaterra y proviçiones de oficios de capitanes y otros cargos de guerra.

Y asimismo se le mostro la otra carta que es sobreescrito en romanze dize al Padre Fray Nicolas de Santa Maria de la orden de nuestro padre San Agustin [de] Sevilla, y abiendola leydo dixo que lo que contiene es lo mesmo que escribe el dicho Padre Fray Daniel S[unbe] en la otra carta

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que le a sido mostrado primeramente y por ella le da cuenta a el dicho Fray Niculas de Santa Maria de casamientos de personas particulares, proviçiones de prioratos y cuenta de algunos conosidos suyos y de missas que se le manderen desir y como avra ydo a Françia con la orden de su Provinçial y que el escribiese a Burdeos y que no a hallado otra cosa en las dichas cartas aunque las ha leydo y que conose muy bien a el Padre Fray Daniel que las escribio aunque no save si es su carta y save que es religioso del orden de señor San Agustin y esto es lo que save y es verdad para el testigo que hizo y lo firmo y el señor Regente.

D. Ber.do Higgino

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