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Title	Two Nugent manuscripts: the Nugent Duanaire and Queen Elizabeth's Primer
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Publication date	2012
Original Citation	Pádraig Ó Macháin (2012) 'Two Nugent manuscripts: the Nugent Duanaire and Queen Elizabeth's Primer'. Ríocht na Midhe: Records of the Meath Archaeological and Historical Society, 23 :121-142.
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Download date	2026-11-15 00:57:18
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/915

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[*Ríocht na Midhe*: *Records of Meath Archaeological and Historical Society* 23 (2012) 121–42]

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Two Nugent manuscripts: the Nugent Duanaire and Queen Elizabeth's Primer

Pádraig Ó Macháin

The association of Old English families with Gaelic culture in late-medieval Ireland is so well documented as to be no longer remarkable. Irish manuscript sources provide evidence for patronage, literary composition, and customary use, and one can extrapolate from the surviving records of families such as Roche, Butler, Fitzgerald, Plunkett, Cantwell, Purcell and Burke that this involvement may have been as commonplace as it was among the Gaelic families themselves. By the close of the 16th century, the extent to which the Old English, and some of the New English, were comfortable with the Irish language and with the learned orders whose currency it was, is illustrated by the itinerary of the Gaelic physician and scholar, Risteard Ó Conchubhair, as he attended to the gentry – native, newcomer and Old English – in Kildare and Kilkenny, *c*. 1590.[1] Having 'degenerated from their ancient dignities', as Spenser put it,[2] the assimilation of the Old English families was undoubtedly deep. At the same time the distinct genealogical origins and affinities of Irish and Old English, the Gaoidheal and the Gall, remained intact, in a tribal rather than a nationalistic way. The famous quatrain by the 14th-century poet Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh on the shifting loyalties of the poets, depending on whether they were addressing Gaoidheal or Gall, is a jocose articulation of this distinction.[3]

The second half of the 16th century was a period of particularly energetic activity in Gaelic letters. At a time when Tudor strategies of plantation and surrender/regrant were beginning to probe the strengths and weaknesses of the lordships, the ruling families in these lordships were anxious to assert their autonomy, self-assurance, and defiance. Bardic poetry was a time-honoured, tradition-laden means of validating the independence and ascendancy of any given patron, and so this period gave rise to an increased sponsorship of this type of aristocratic literary activity. This resurgence, in turn, brought about a virtual renaissance in bardic poetry: it was at this time that many of **[p. 122]** our surviving bardic poem-books (*duanaireadha*) were created as lasting statements of independence and pre-eminence.

This renaissance was not without its risks to the poets. The various proclamations and commissions issued in the 16th century by the crown authorities restricting the movement of poets are typified in the Desmond treaty of 1563, which ordered the proclamation of 'idle men of lewd demeanor called rhymers, bards, and dice players, called carroghes, who, under pretence of their travail, bring privy intelligence between the malefactors inhabiting those shires, to the great destruction of all true subjects'.[4] Versions of this were repeated elsewhere in the country, particularly in Leinster, over subsequent decades.[5] Until the infamous hanging of three of their number by the 3rd Earl of Thomond in 1572,[6] the learned classes may have regarded such ordinances as unenforceable aspirations, if they were aware of them at all. After the Thomond incident, however, the poets become noticeably more uneasy. It was reported in 1589 how Conaire Ó Maoil Chonaire had barely managed to escape when he was about to be hanged for composing a poem for Ó Ruairc.[7] The Tír Conaill poet, Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird, recorded that after the death in 1596 of one of his major patrons, Aodh Mág Aonghusa of Rathfriland, Co. Down, it was not safe for a poet to venture forth without a gallows facing him on

every road.[8] At about the same time the Connacht poet, Seaán Mac Céibheannaigh, blamed a fellow poet, Cormac Uaine Ó hUiginn, for putting him in danger of his life by enticing him to journey to Leinster. In the poem recording this, Mac Céibheannaigh addresses Death as follows:[9]

> Narab día do bheatha a bháis
> a cheann uidhe gach úathbháis
> beag dot olc a mheabhlaigh mhir
> tochd dom leanmhuin a Laíghnibh.
>
> *Curse you Death, summit of all terror: it is but a small part of your evil, you deceitful maniac, that you have followed me into Leinster.*
>
> Rugus céim ad cuinne a bháis
> a Laighnibh dámhna doláis
> ní bríoghmur tarbha ar ttoisge
> líonmur tarla an tuboisde
>
> *In Leinster, a cause of misery, I took a step towards you, Death; the benefit of our journey is not life-giving, disaster is plentiful.*
>
> **[p. 123]**
>
> Measa mur tarla trúagh sin
> ni fhuil réam lind a Laíghnibh
> duine ar bioth gan baspurt Goill
> ag rioth da nannsmachd eadroinn
>
> *Alas things get worse: there is no-one now in Leinster without a Gall's passport, hurrying among us by virtue of their tyranny.*
>
> Croch a ccionn gacha baile
> ni hí an croch gan crochaire
> ní nár dhúinn da ngabham glonn
> s gan suil re manam agom.[10]
>
> *There is a gallows in every town, a gallows not neglected by the hangman! It would be no shame to me were I to commit a crime as I do not expect to live.*

That such journeys were undertaken, despite whatever dangers existed, is amply demonstrated by the presence of poets from Ulster (Mac an Bhaird), Connacht (Ó hUiginn), and Munster (Mac Craith) in the *duanaire* of Fiachaidh (mac Aodha) Ó Broin of Glenmalure, Co. Wicklow.[11]

Nothing better symbolizes both the new assertiveness and the resurgent literature than the Book of the De Burgos and the Book of O'Hara.[12] In many ways, both are very different manuscripts, a point highlighted by the mixture of Latin and Irish text and script in the former, not to mention, in the same manuscript, a set of fourteen full-page illustrations of a type unique in Irish manuscript history. Nevertheless, the general points of comparison are also compelling: the fact that both books were made within twenty years of each other (1578 and 1597) and in neighbouring lordships in Mayo and Sligo respectively, and that both manuscripts show the involvement of Í Uiginn poets. Typifying the latter

point are genealogical poems in both books by one of the most famous poets of his day, Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn. The genealogical poem addressed to Seaán mac Oilbhéarus Búrc (d. 1580) traces his genealogy to Charlemagne and asserts the right of the Burkes to rule Ireland by virtue of conquest.[13] A similarly themed poem is addressed by Tadhg to Cormac Ó hEadhra (d. 1612), where the genealogy of the Í Eadhra is traced to Éibhear son of Míl, and the right of the family to rule by force is asserted.[14] Taken together, both poems illustrate well Gofraidh Fionn's humorous observation of over two hundred years earlier.

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The Nugent Manuscript

As the material that forms much of the contents of these two north-Connacht manuscripts was being composed and assembled, a comparable manuscript was being written on the western borders of the Pale, at a time when relations between the Dublin government and the Palesmen were becoming turbulent.[15] Just as the Book of the De Burgos is at one point dated 1578 by reference to the rule of the queen of England,[16] so the Nugent Poem-book (Duanaire na Nuinseannach) bears an inscription early in that manuscript which provides a definite date for that section at least:[17]

> Anno domini .1577. agus an .ixmadh bliadhan .x. do quiin isibél a rígheacht hsaxan agus eireann
>
> *The Year of the Lord 1577 and the 19th year of Queen Elizabeth in the kingship of England and Ireland*

This manuscript is now National Library of Ireland MS G 992. It is written in a single hand,[18] unsigned, on vellum leaves which have been cropped and which now measure 22.5–23 x 18–18.5 centimetres. These leaves are ruled in dry point on both sides, with the guidelines extending to the margins. There is a double-rule on the left of the text-grid, and the initials of the verses are aligned on the outside of this rule. The text is written in single column, the characters bisected by the guidelines rather than resting on them. As in the Book of O'Hara, a manuscript of comparable dimensions, the scribe of the Nugent manuscript uses the return-sign ('ceann fo eite'), a space-saving relic of poetry in two-column format,[19] in the traditional way to accommodate, at the end of the preceding verse, a run-on of a line of text from the following verse. The symbol used in the Nugent manuscript is a pair of long horizontal hooks, parallel and inverted relative to each other. This arrangement lasts from f. 1 to the antepenultimate line on f. 16r. On the second-last line of f. 16r, in the middle of a poem by Gofraidh Fionn Ó Dálaigh, the scribe switches style so that each verse of poetry is accommodated on a single line of the manuscript. This results in a reduction in the size of the characters, an increase in the use of contractions and compendia, and the abandonment of the return-sign. This arrangement continues to the top of f. 22v, to the end of a poem by Aonghus Ruadh Ó Dálaigh, which concludes this section of the manuscript, and the remainder of the page is filled with notes on eighteenth-century Nugents. The manuscript **[p. 125]** resumes with a new section concentrating on poetry local to the midlands. This folio is numbered 29, and whether ff. 23–28 are missing, or this is an error in the foliation, has yet to be determined. In any case, this new section beginning at f. 29 marks another change in style, though not in scribe. The verse per line of ff. 16v–22 is abandoned in favour of a verse per two lines, with the return-sign employed again but merely in a line-filling function where a space occurs at the end of a verse. The script therefore increases again and, as in ff. 1–16r, there is once more a notable paucity of scribal contractions and compendia.

In contrast to the north-Connacht books mentioned above, the Nugent manuscript is not a collection

devoted to the glorification of a single family through contents exclusively confined to that family. Rather it is an early example of a type of general anthology of bardic poetry that was to become more common in the 17th century.[20] That said, this manuscript is far from being devoid of characteristics of importance. It contains forty-nine bardic poems, plus an 18th-century composition that was tipped in at the end of the manuscript. Of those of the forty-nine poems which are datable, six belong to the 13th century, seven to the 14th, eight to the 15th, and twenty-three are contemporary or near-contemporary compositions. Its value is further underlined when analysis reveals that twenty-five poems are unique to the manuscript. Most of these unique poems are contemporary, but others belong to earlier times, an example being a poem by the renowned 13th-century poet Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe.[21] A further poem by Mac Con Midhe illustrates another aspect of the manuscript: that by virtue of the fact that it is one of the earliest anthologies of its kind, it preserves the earliest surviving copy of many of the poems that are not unique to the manuscript.[22] The manuscript was digitized by Irish Script on Screen in 2002 and can be viewed on the website of that project: www.isos.dias.ie.

This *duanaire* contains the work of nineteen named poets, representative of all the provinces, a small number of poems bearing no ascription. Not surprisingly, being a Westmeath manuscript, the most frequently occurring poets are those of the Ó Cobhthaigh family, the work of six of whom is anthologised here. Two poets of that family – Muircheartach and Diarmuid – are represented by five and six poems respectively, and both of them are contemporary with the making of the manuscript. Diarmuid's work is of particular interest as it is almost exclusively devotional in content and was **[p. 126]** probably composed under Nugent patronage, the exception being an elegy on a kinsman, Eóghan Ó Cobhthaigh.[23] Religious poems account for almost a third of the contents of the manuscript. In view of the recusancy of the manuscript's patron, which will be noted below, this total is probably of significance, and shows that the independence which these late *duanaireadha* symbolised encompassed both political and religious independence. In this feature the Nugent manuscript invites comparison with the near-contemporary *duanaire* assembled for Aodh Buidhe Mac Domhnaill of Tinnakill, Queen's County, which, together with genealogical material, contains four poems addressed to members of that family (including one by Muircheartach Ó Cobhthaigh[24]) inserted on vellum at the back of the book. This small collection of family material, however, is subordinated to an anthology of eighty-three bardic religious poems written on parchment and constituting the *duanaire* proper.[25]

As with the number of poets, the range of patrons of the poems anthologised in the Nugent manuscript is equally impressive. Poems to many of the great Irish families over four centuries are included: Ó Néill, Ó Domhnaill, Ó Conchubhair Connacht, Ó Briain, Ó Ceallaigh, Mac Carthaigh; and on the Old English side there are poems to the Fitzgeralds, Butlers and Burkes. In addition to these distinguished families, there are poems in the manuscript which are concerned with a small number of midlands families: Bermingham, Ó Conchubhair Failghe, Ó Maoil Mhuaidh, Ó Mórdha, and of course the Nugents of Delvin. Three poems to the Nugents are included (ff. 33v–36v), all composed by Muircheartach Ó Cobhthaigh and addressed respectively to Gearóid, Uilliam and Criosdóir.[26] The poem concerning Gearóid (beginning *Mairg as dáileamh don digh bhróin* f. 33v) is an elegy, and is thought to refer to Gerald of Tristernagh who died in 1565, and who was brother of Richard Nugent, Baron Delvin (d. 1559).[27] It is Richard's sons William and Christopher, the subjects of the other two poems, who concern us here.

A non-scribal note on f. 22v of the Nugent manuscript declares: 'Ag so duanaire uilliam meic an bharon on Rose' (*This is the poem-book of William son of the Baron from Ross*).[28] This note leaves us in no doubt as to the owner, and probable patron, of the Nugent manuscript, the semi-anglicized placename referring to the tower-house at Ross, on the shores of Lough Sheelin, frequently enumerated among William Nugent's holdings.[29] By this style of 'Mac an Bharúin (Dealbhna)' William Nugent (*c*.

1550–1625*)* was known in Irish sources, particularly **[p. 127]** in the ascriptions to him of the four surviving poems that bear witness to his poetic ability and to his interest and participation in Gaelic culture.[30] The sonnets that he is reputed to have composed 'in the English toong'[31] have not survived, but his Irish poems are found in manuscripts of the 17th century and later, and one of them – beginning *Diombáidh triall ó thulchaibh Fáil* – was especially popular in that tradition. This and its companion poem (*Fada i n-éagmais inse Fáil*) are poems of exile, a genre that was to increase in relevance with the advent and progression of the 17th century, and one in which William's friend Giolla Brighde Ó hEódhusa (see below) was also productive.[32] With their expressions of desire to return from England and from the Gaill, and their extolling of the virtues of the poets and priests, and of the general excellence of Ireland, one would be forgiven for forgetting that William's poems are the youthful effusions of a member of an Old English family, probably dating from his days at Oxford in the early 1570s.

His two other works are more localised elegiac poems, expressing sadness at the demise of the men of Fermanagh, and of Cú Chonnacht Mág Uidhir in particular. This is probably the Cú Chonnacht (d. 1589) whose *duanaire* – containing poems composed exclusively in his honour – is contemporary with the Nugent manuscript.[33] William's affection for Fermanagh may date from his activities during his rebellion of 1581 and subsequent years, specifically the time of his journey north, ultimately to Scotland, and on to France and Rome. This rebellion bore, in some of its details, signs of the religious overtones that were to become increasingly overt in the conflicts that marked the closing years of the 16th century.[34] In such a context, the high proportion of religious poems in the Nugent manuscript, assembled and written practically on the eve of the rebellion, can be interpreted as expressive of the values of the 'staunch sons of the Church', as Standish Hayes O'Grady dubbed the Nugent family.[35]

His affection for Fermanagh may also be connected to William's association with a poet and scholar from that region, Giolla Brighde (later Fr Bonaventura) Ó hEódhusa, and may further account for his accomplishments in the metrical intricacies of bardic poetry, for Ó hEódhusa was among the first to synthesise the teaching of the bardic schools into a single coherent text.[36] While pursuing his new-found religious vocation in the Low Countries, Giolla Brighde sent two letter-poems to Delvin, one to William expressing the exile's longing, the other to William's wife, Janet Marward, offering condolences on **[p. 128]** the death of her son Richard.[37] These two poems are elegant, refined creations, and, together with William's own compositions, are more aligned to the relatively new world of Irish renaissance letters than to the traditional, core bardic poetry anthologised in the Nugent manuscript.

Of the latter type is the poem in the manuscript addressed to William by Muircheartach Ó Cobhthagh (ff. 34v–35v), beginning *Do ní clú áit oighreachda*. This is in a strict *dán díreach* variety of the bardic metre known as *casbhairdne*, where quatrains are built in lines of seven syllables, each line ending in a trisyllabic word, with alliteration in each line, and involving end-rhyme, assonance and internal rhyme. Quite often this is a metre that is intended for display rather than for nicety of argument and expression, and display-poems like it are a feature of some *duanaireadha*. While expounding the message of the aphorismic first line, that fame is a good substitute for hereditary title, which as younger son William does not have, two standard and interdependent bardic themes alternate: William's martial prowess and his generosity to the poets. In articulating this over 31 quatrains, Muircheartach makes no effort to hide the fact that the supremacy that William embodies is that of the Gall over the Gaoidheal:

> Fríoth comha an fhuind Éireandaigh
> do dhruim osaidh fhíorandaimh
> beag an béim dfhíadh Fhéilimidh
> a ngéill riamh ag ríoghallaibh (q. 8)

The ransom of the land of Ireland was received following a very rare truce; it is little reproach to Féilimidh's country that their hostages should always be held by the royal foreigners.

By virtue of this English supremacy William frees Uisneach, acquires great wealth, and this wealth in turn is plundered by visiting poets to the extent that no-one begrudges William his riches.

Táinic tríot ó thrénShacsaibh
síodh ní háil don fhíonfhuilsin
sgaoile ar sgáth airm órarsaidh
a snaidhm do ráith ríoghUisnigh (q. 18)

Through you was accomplished by the powerful English – such wine-blood desires no peace – that, under the protection of ancient weaponry, you untie the knot from the fort of royal Uisneach.

[p. 129]

Sgol ad dháil um dhubhnónaidh
do chur áir ar hiolmhaoinibh
fiú ar nochd aoidhe dainríaghail
maoine ort nach ionmhaoidhimh (q. 19)

A school of poets approach you at midnight to plunder your great wealth; such importunity does a visiting poet display that no-one begrudges you your riches.

Queen Elizabeth's Irish Primer

During the winter of 1580/1581, while William Nugent was forging alliances with Gaoidheal and Gall, and evading efforts to capture him, his brother, Christopher (*c*. 1544–1602*),* Baron Delvin, was imprisoned in Dublin Castle. Though under custody, the authorities suspected that he was still able to advise and encourage William, and he was thought to have been more deeply involved in his brother's revolt than could be proved. After William made good his escape to Scotland and to Europe, where, foreshadowing the efforts of the Earls three decades later, he tried to canvas support for an invasion of Ireland, Christopher was released from the Tower of London to which he had been committed in 1582. The cloud of suspicion would rarely lift from him thenceforth. Despite his protestations and demonstrations of loyalty and service, his engagement with Gaelic society and his overt support of the clergy, regular and secular – particularly in the case of the friary of Multyfarnham – made him a marked man.[38] He was arrested on charges of treason in 1602, and died of illness in Dublin Castle in October of that year. Though Multyfarnham under Nugent patronage was to remain vibrant well into the 17th century,[39] its burning in 1601 together with Christopher's death in Dublin Castle the following year must have been viewed as decisive events at the time. To this extent Lochlann Óg Ó Dálaigh's lament for the destruction of the friary has a significance beyond its immediate occasion. It belongs to a contemporary genre of laments for abandoned buildings – castles and monasteries – but to its audience it may have seemed like a lament for Multyfarnham's patrons, and for post-reformation Ireland, as much as for its expelled community.

Do díbreadh uaid – uch mo thruaighe –
do theaghlach bocht bráithreamhail;
do-chím sibh gan fhear dot ionnramh,
a threabh bhionnghlan bhláithshleamhain.[40]

[p. 130]

From you, alas, were expelled your poor brotherly community; pure, sweet, handsome house, I see you without a man to direct you.

The poem addressed by Muircheartach Ó Cobhthagh to Christopher in the Nugent manuscript (ff. 35v–36v) reflects a happier, earlier time in his career, when he had recently come into his inheritance. As in the poem to his brother William, the opening line has compensatory implications – *Geall re hiarlachd ainm barúin* 'A baronetage is virtually an earldom' – and contains the same themes of generosity to poets, severity to enemies, and supremacy of Gall over Gaoidheal, but in the more consecutive rhetorical sequence permitted by the *rannaigheacht bheag* metre. Such is the supremacy of the foreign warriors that they need not do battle to achieve it:

Fian ghall s gan dola a ndeabhaidh
Bánbha fá chomha cuiridh
an leath toir riamh na rodhain
anoir ghabthair fíadh fuinidh (q. 11)

The foreign army places Ireland under tribute without going into battle; the east of the country is always superior: Ireland is conquered from the east.

As the epitome of this supremacy, Christopher is the archetypal ideal ruler during whose reign lawlessness is unheard of, so that a fruiting tree on the public highway is left untouched (a common motif):

An smachdúd as duit dhleaghar
a Bharúin do bhreith dhlighidh
léigthear sáor í dot omhan
craobh thoraidh as sí ar slighidh (q. 28)

That discipline is legally due to you, Baron: a fruiting tree on the highway is untouched out of fear of you.

In time-honoured style, the poet then proclaims Christopher to be the one most likely to be the supreme ruler of Ireland, the choice bridegroom for Tara:

Criosdóir a céile cubhaidh
do Chriosdóir as séd samhail
ní fada an léim tug Teamhair
a mBreaghaibh féin rug rodhain (q. 31)

Christopher is her proper mate, [and] she is the match for Christopher; Tara did not have to journey far, she found her choice one in Breagha.

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The poem ends with five quatrains in honour of Christopher's wife Mary, daughter of Gearóid, 11th Earl of Kildare, in which the Saxon origins ('fuil Shacsan') are again emphasised.

No more than the poem to William, that to Christopher bears no trace of the disharmony between the Nugents and the crown that was to mark the end of his career. Such a fatally acrimonious relationship was even more difficult to imagine during his formative years. Christopher had succeeded to Delvin on the death of his father Richard in December 1559. An *óglách*as poem, akin to Ossianic tradition in its free style and expressiveness, is the only surviving lament for Richard, which shows that Christopher's and William's relationship with poets and learning was a continuation of ancestral ways.[41] The poet who composed Richard's elegy stresses that he is not a practitioner of *dán*, highly accomplished poetry such as that found in the Nugent manuscript. Were it not for that, he says, he would be able to provide an account in verse of Richard's martial achievements, which he consequently leaves to another poet. This *caithréim* does not appear to have survived.

Still is his minority at the time of his father's death, Christopher was brought under the wardship of the Lord Deputy, the Earl of Sussex. He is recorded as having matriculated in the University of Cambridge (Clare Hall) in Easter 1563, which he left two years later on reaching his majority in 1565, whereupon he was knighted and he returned to his patrimony.[42] These details of his life are well known. What has not been remarked upon is the fact that his sojourn at Cambridge coincided with that of John Kearney (Seaán Ó Cearnaigh), author of an Irish primer with a translation into Irish of the catechism from the *Book of Common Prayer*, the first book in Irish ever printed in Ireland.[43] In 1563, presumably while at Cambridge, Kearney, by his own testimony, had produced an early and inferior version of this translation, no trace of which survives today.[44] Such stirrings in the use of the vernacular for religious purposes were taking place precisely at a time when Elizabeth was making funding available for the production of a fount of type in order that the New Testament in Irish might be printed,[45] and instructing the Lord Deputy in 1564 that Robert Daly be appointed as Bishop of Kildare on the grounds of his ability to preach in Irish.[46] Kearney himself would work on the translation of the New Testament up to his death *c.* 1587, and the new fount of type would be used firstly in his book published in 1571, before being employed in *Tiomna Nuadh ar dTighearna agus ar* **[p. 132]** *Slanaightheora Iosa Criosd* of 1602/3, *Leabhar na nurnaightheadh gcomhchoidchiond* of 1608, and other works.[47]

However circumstantial the evidence, it is difficult not to entertain a connection between John Kearney and Christopher Nugent when one considers the second surviving Nugent manuscript, that commonly referred to as Elizabeth's Irish Primer. This manuscript first came to public attention when extracts and images of six pages from it were published by John Gilbert in 1882, together with extensive notes relating to Nugent himself.[48] At the time, the manuscript was in the library of E. P. Shirley at Lough Fea, near Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan.[49] Having been subsequently auctioned twice, and on the second occasion acquired by Benjamin Guinness, 3rd Earl of Iveagh, in 1980, it is now housed with his collection in Farmleigh House, Dublin. It has recently been digitized by Irish Script on Screen and can be viewed on the website of that project: www.isos.dias.ie.

The manuscript is a slight book of 24 pages (a single gathering of 12) within parchment wrappers, measuring 12.6 x 16.8 centimetres. The front cover is tooled in gold and has a crown above a Tudor rose flanked by the royal initials E and R. Its contents are tripartite, six pages being devoted to each

part. An introduction in English (ff. 2–4), printed in full by Gilbert,[50] is addressed to the 'moste gratious and Vertuous Soueraigne' praising her for her desire to understand the language of her people in Ireland and referring to how the manuscript originated in Elizabeth's command – 'whiche I take a spetiall fauor' – to the author to 'delyuer your Highnes the Iryshe Caracters with instructions for reading of the language'. The queen is commended for deciding to learn Irish through the written word rather than the spoken word: 'by the letter' rather than 'by demaundinge the signyfacation of the wordes'. As an example of the success of this method, the precedent is cited of Elizabeth Zouche, first wife of Gerald, 9th Earl of Kildare, and Christopher Nugent's great-grandmother: 'in shorte tyme she learned to reade, write, and perfectlye speake the tongue'. The introduction concludes by affirming that this royal determination to learn the language will result in the spread of justice and civility in Ireland and the increased love of her subjects. It is signed (f. 4v) 'Your Ma*jes*ties moste humble subiect & seruante. .C. Deluin'. This signature confirms the author of the manuscript as Christopher Nugent.[51]

By Christopher's account, the queen had requested of him only that he supply her with the Irish alphabet with reading instructions. **[p. 133]** Before he complies with that request, however, he adds a second section, which he has signalled in his introduction thus (f. 3r):

> I thought it not inconuenyent to ioyne therto the originall of the nation also; to the ende your maiestye knowinge from whence they came, & theire tongue deryued, might the soner attaine to the perfection thereof.

This description of the origins of the Gaoidhil and of their language is an addition to the material requested of him by the queen. It is Christopher's own idea, and to signify the importance and seriousness of this second section (ff. 5–7), it is presented in Latin, the language of scholarship and disputation.

This short treatise begins by referring to scripture, and by associating the origins of Irish with the division of the world and the confusion of languages in the time of Phaleg (Peleg). It then details how the Irish-speaking inhabitants of Ireland, Scotland, the Hebrides and the Isle of Man, trace their origins to Gaedhelus, fifth in descent from Iaphet, son of Noah, whose descendants arrived in Ireland from Scythia via Spain. To this popular tradition, deriving from *Leabhar Gabhála*, Christopher adds the testimony of Giraldus Cambrensis (citing *Topographia* 3.7), who also made use of that source, for Irish being derived from other languages, especially from Greek and Latin.

Examples are then provided of correspondences with Irish from the sacred languages, Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Nugent does this in a scientific way, by applying to selected examples the theories of word-change through aspiration and metaplasmus of Aelius Donatus, one of the standard authors on grammar and rhetoric studied in the medieval and renaissance university. The fact that Donatus is not cited by name shows how familiar with his work the reader was expected to be. Irish *deamhon* is said to represent Greek *daimon* through aspiration, and the other examples cited are those of different species of metaplasmus, particularly aphaeresis (loss of letters at the beginning of words), epenthesis (addition of letters to a word), apocope (loss of letters from the end of a word), antithesis (substitution of letters) and methathesis (transposition of letters).[52] For instance, in Nugent's interpretation of this theory, Latin *frater* becomes Irish *bráthair* through antithesis; *athair* (Latin *pater*) and *bán* (Hebrew *laban*) are examples of aphaeresis; *cam/camm* (Greek *kampulos*) and *cróch* (Greek *krokos*) show apocope, while *toil* (Greek *t[h]eléma*) is said to combine antithesis, metathesis and apocope.

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This section concludes with a summary of the morphological similarities between Irish and Latin in matters such as declensions, conjugations and prepositional pronouns, stating how features such as accidence, concord, construction, mood and flexion are features of both languages. There are some further brief remarks on the relative particle and on the pronunciation of bh/mh before vowels. Though these closing sentences appear to have been inserted to fill out the page, the reference to the relative particle is noteworthy. Nugent says: 'Proprium relativum est, a, obscurum saepius, raro clarum' (*There is a personal relative,* a, *more frequently obscure* [*in pronunciation*]*, seldom clear*). This appears to be the earliest reference so far recorded from an Irish source to the relative particle *a*, thought to be a dialectal development from *do*, which was itself an analogical derivative of the preverb *to-/do-*.[53] Though present in the Book of the Dean of Lismore, a Scottish manuscript of the early sixteenth century, the first occurrence of the form hitherto recorded from an Irish source was in the translation of the New Testament in 1602/3,[54] a work first begun by Nugent's fellow student, John Kearney (see below).

A progression of thought is to be discerned in these first two sections of Nugent's work. They stress firstly the importance of the acquisition of Irish by the queen – and implicitly by those in authority – as a means through which the Irish will 'receaue iustice', and 'cyuilytie' will be established; and secondly, in the unsolicited part of the work, the antiquity and distinguished pedigree of both the Gaoidhil and their language. In so doing, Christopher Nugent is providing a painstaking and scholarly counter-argument to one of the premises on which the violent Elizabethan conquest of Ireland proceeded: that the Irish were savages and their language little more than the sounds of animals.[55] In citing Cambrensis, he is turning to his own contrary purpose the standard authority invoked by the contemporary colonial writers whose tracts and treatises provided the intellectual justification for the conquest.[56]

In retrospect this may seem like naiveté on Nugent's part, as events were to confirm that Elizabeth's interest in Irish had little to do with justice or civility, and was confined to the practicalities of ministering the reformed religion to a people whose daily commerce was in a language other than English. Nevertheless, this tract remains as evidence, all the more important because part of it was unsolicited, of an effort on the part of a prominent Palesman to make a case for acceptance of the Irish language and the Irish people as being of noble and sacred lineage.

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Sections one and two both begin with an elaborate initial – A and C respectively – drawn by hand in imitation of contemporary woodcuts. The third and final section (ff. 8–10) does not have this decoration but instead is begun with a display-heading – 'The Irish Alphabet' – in gothic script, or black letter, and ending in a hedera. The use of gothic at this point in the manuscript reflects contemporary practice in printed English ABC books, in which the text was presented primarily in black letter, with other material in roman and italic.[57] As with the Nugent primer, the opening page of such books, including the popular simplified form of the hornbook,[58] showed the alphabet in upper and lower case.

The minuscule Gaelic alphabet, which appears beneath the heading, omits *j*, *w*, and *z*; it includes *k* (= ca) and *q* (=cu), two forms of *s* (regular and uncial), and also *x* (= 'deich' or 'éags-') and *y* (= ui), to which are added three further compendia and ligatures, *vi* (= ui), 7 (= agus) and *Et*. Beneath this, the majuscule alphabet (minus *x*, *y*, and compendia/ligatures) is laid out in columns by letter, Irish name for the letter, and equivalent letter in gothic script. On f. 8v the alphabet (omitting *h*) is broken up into vowels (subdivided into broad and long, short and sharp) and consonants (light and short, heavy and long), with a further page (f. 9r) dedicated to laying out seventeen diphthongs. This third and final

section is brought to a close (ff. 9v–10v) with a list of twelve words and six phrases, in three columns headed ‘Iryshe’, ‘Latten’, and ‘Englishe’. In the first column, the Irish is written in Gaelic script and according to pronunciation in the case of these words: *aher*, *maher*, *braher*, *Muri, tala, ro, maih* (athair, máthair, bráthair, Muire, talamh, raibh, maith). The list of phrases, and the manuscript itself, concludes memorably with ‘Dia le riuean saxona / Deus adiuat Reginam Angliae / God saue the Queene off Englande’.

Nugent’s treatment of the alphabet is worth dwelling on briefly, partly because, prior to digitization in 2011, his manuscript primer was unavailable for consideration among the works of the native Irish grammarians. The order of the letters is according to the Latin alphabet, rather than the *ogham* order (b, l, f, s, n etc.) of the bardic tracts, but with the *ogham* names given for the letters.[59] While the Latin order was the obvious one to set before the Queen of England, it was also to become the norm in extra-bardic discussions of language from this point onwards, including those of Kearney, Ó hEódhusa and Tadhg Óg Ó hUiginn.[60]

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It is instructive to compare Nugent’s treatment of the alphabet with that of Kearney.[61] Like Christopher, Kearney’s arrangement is in columns by Irish letter, name, and roman equivalent. He differs from Nugent in that he includes *z* (‘straiph’), calls (with Ó hEódhusa) the letter *p* ‘pethbog’ – which Nugent calls simply ‘peth’[62] – omits *vi*, and includes reversed-*c* (= con) among the compendia. Nugent’s arrangement of vowels and consonants (f. 8v) is much simplified. Both are divided into two groups. The *a*, *o*, *u* group of vowels are ‘deuidede as Soundinge broad & long’, while *e* and *i* are ‘Soundynge shorte & sharp’. The designations of short and long in these cases can hardly refer to vowel length, as all may be either short or long; perhaps ‘broad and long’ represents an attempt to accommodate *latus* and *crassus*, alternative terms occurring in versions of Ó hEódhusa’s grammar describing a broad vowel.[63] By the same token, the variant terms *tenuis* and *acutus* describe the slender vowels in the same source. Leaving aside questions of length, ‘broad’ and ‘sharp’ are good translations of Irish *leathan* and *caol*, the traditional designation used by Kearney and others.

The two groups of consonants are *b*, *d*, *g*, *l*, *m*, *n*, and *r* ‘In pronuntiation, lyght and shorte’; and *c*, *f*, *k*, *p*, *q*, *s*, and *t* ‘In pronuntiation, heavye and longe’. Leaving aside again questions of length, which may have no other foundation here than considerations of symmetry, these classifications of light and heavy have no parallel in the six divisions of consonants in bardic teaching, apart from the inclusion of three of the *consaine éadroma* (*l*, *n*, *r*) among those reckoned as ‘light’ here.[64] Yet the division is not altogether random, as the first group contains liquid consonants and voiced plosives, while the second contains voiceless plosives, [65] the fricative *f*, and the sibilant *s*; with the exception of *f*, which can represent *ph*, no mention is made of the lenited forms *bh*, *dh*, *gh*, *ch*, *th*, or indeed of *mm*, *nn*, or *ng*.

This treatment of the consonants contrasts greatly with that of Kearney, where, omitting *h* (with Nugent) but also *k* and *q,* and including the lenited forms, they are accorded their bardic groupings in what is visually a dense and uncompromising presentation. Perhaps in this latter observation we have a key to Nugent’s analysis. Within the space of one small page he had to fit a description of the ‘voelles and consonantes in the Irish’ and present them in an orderly and pleasing manner. For that reason, the traditional division of the consonants may have had to be largely abandoned in favour of a less pedantic analysis.

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Finally, it is in his presentation of the 'seuenten Dypthonges in Iryshe' that Christopher Nugent is most in keeping with bardic teaching and with John Kearney.[66] The list and order of the seventeen 'diphthongs' are identical to those in the *Aibidil*, except that Kearney adds the bardic divisions of the letters and the bardic names for those divisions.

Such comparison between Nugent's Primer and Kearney's *Aibidil* is not between like and like, however. Kearney's work was clearly planned on a far greater scale than that allowed by Nugent's structure of three sections in 18 pages, which allows a mere three pages to the alphabet. As a summary of the Irish language, made intelligible to a non-speaker, his work is not unreasonable. In addition, the skeletal description of the letters by alphabet, vowels, consonants and diphthongs is exactly the same structure which underlies Kearney's more detailed description, and the similarity of the presentation of the 'diphthongs' in both works is particularly striking. It is a point of interest, therefore, that Brian Ó Cuív regarded Kearney's name for the letter *k*, 'collailm', as an innovation,[67] unaware that it had been used earlier in Nugent's primer (f. 8r).

This raises the question of the relative dates of the two works. The primer is undated, and the unicorn watermark has so far proved elusive for dating the paper with precision. A signature in the lower margin of f. 2r reads 'Sr J. H. Cotton Bart Madingley'. This associates the book with John Hynde Cotton (1686–1752) of Madingley near Cambridge, and a note by E. P. Shirley tipped in at f. 1r relates how the book was reportedly discovered in the time of Sir John Hynde's grandson, Sir St Vincent Cotton, during renovations at Madingley in 1860. Given this provenance, it is possible that it belongs to the time of Christopher's sojourn at Cambridge, though whether it was in any way connected to the queen's visit of 1564, as has been suggested by some, cannot be established.[68] A university location would also account for the heavy scholastic content of section two of the work. Though possibly familiar with Latin and Greek already, Christopher would have received added exposure to learning in Latin, Greek and Hebrew at Cambridge.[69] Taking into account the possibility of it being a Cambridge production, together with John Kearney's attendance at Cambridge at exactly the same time as Christopher Nugent when, by Kearney's own testament, he produced a translation of the *Book of Common Prayer* inferior to that published by him in 1571; it is possible that what we have in the third section of the Nugent **[p. 138]** primer is a text deriving from a linguistic introduction by Kearney which may have accompanied that poor initial effort. With or without Kearney's help, however, Nugent must still be regarded as the author of Elizabeth's primer.

It is notable that the manuscript, despite its brevity, presents four distinct scripts: a roman bookhand – 'conceiued to be the easiest hand that is written with Pen'[70] – in the introduction; an italic bookhand for the Latin text; a gothic script on ff. 8r and 8v, and of course the Gaelic script. Christopher's signature (f. 4v) is in a lighter ink and in a non-calligraphic, slightly cursive hand, in the manner of one appending his name to a formally prepared document. It is an open question whether or not Christopher Nugent had the range of calligraphic skills necessary for him to be considered the scribe of this book. Yet, in an age when 'gentlemen were expected to be literate',[71] it would be unjust to deprive him of the credit of the scribal work in the absence of any compelling evidence to the contrary.

Summary

Despite the turmoil of the times, the second half of the 16th century was marked by an upsurge in the patronage of bardic poetry and in the creation of manuscript collections symbolizing the independence and the opulence of the lordships, Gaelic and Old English. The Nugent *duanaire* is one such collection: an anthology of bardic poetry, devotional and secular, comprising a selection of poems from four centuries. Nearly half of the poems are contemporary, and include three poems composed by Muircheartach Ó Cobhthaigh for members of the Nugent family, and five devotional poems composed

by Diarmuid Ó Cobhthaigh, possibly at the behest of the manuscript's patron and owner, William Nugent of Ross, who was in his late twenties at the time of the creation of the book.

William's brother, Christopher Nugent, Baron Delvin, is also represented in Irish manuscript tradition, and his book appears to be a product of his youth. Though slight and ephemeral, his Irish primer, written at the command of Queen Elizabeth, represents, in an inchoate and skeletal form, the beginning of extra-bardic analysis and presentation of the Irish language. The primer also has associations – mainly circumstantial – with John Kearney, and by extension with the movement towards the representation of the Irish language in print. Through an apologia for engagement with the language and its traditions as a civilised and civilising activity, associating the Irish and **[p. 139]** their language with biblical tradition and with the sacred languages, the primer also presents a tacit argument against contemporary colonial propaganda which viewed the Irish and their language as barbarous. It is this aspect of the text that makes this small book a poignant political relic.

Between them, these two manuscripts align the Nugent family with the native linguistic and literary interests of both Gall and Gaoidheal. They show William and Christopher as comfortable and confident within the Gaelic tradition, and as advocates for that tradition – an engagement that in William's case is confirmed by the evidence of other documents – without prejudice to their non-Gaelic ancestry. In so doing, the two manuscripts provide an insight into an important aspect of Gaelic and Old English society within the Pale at a period of accelerating and irrevocable change.[72]

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1 Paul Walsh, *Gleanings from Irish manuscripts* (2nd ed., Dublin 1933) 123–33; Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha, 'The medical school of Aghmacart, Queen's County', *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 2 (2006) 11–43: 22–4.
2 Henry Morley, *Ireland under Elizabeth and James the First* (London 1890) 105.
3 Láimhbheartach Mac Cionnaith (ed.), *Dioghluim dána* (Dublin 1938) Poem 67.46.
4 *Calendar of Patent Rolls, Henry VIII to Elizabeth*, 486–7.
5 Walsh, *Gleanings*, 185–7. See further *Calendar of Carew Manuscripts* (1575–1588) 197, 369, (1603–1624) 157–8.
6 Brian Ó Cuív, '*The earl of Thomond and the poets*, A.D. 1572', *Celtica* 12 (1977) 125–45.
7 J. G. O'Keeffe, 'Letter from Conaire Ó Mailchonaire', *Irish Texts* 4 (1934) 27–9; Pól Breathnach, 'A pretty pair of ruffians', *The Irish Book Lover* 23 (1935) 134–41.
8 'do bhiadh croch roimhe ar gach raon': Cáit Ní Dhomhnaill, *Duanaireacht*: *rialacha meadarachta fhilíocht na mbard* (Dublin 1975) 108, line 705.
9 The Book of the O'Conor Don, f. 13v.
10 Scribal correction of: 'do chúaidh manam asom'.
11 Seán Mac Airt (ed.), *Leabhar Branach: The Book of the O'Byrnes* (Dublin 1944). Fiachaidh was an ally of the Nugents, the subject of this paper: see for example Emmett O'Byrne, *War, politics and the Irish of Leinster, 1156–1606* (Dublin 2003) 199, 204–5.
12 Book of the De Burgos: TCD MS 1440 (F.4.13); T. K. Abbott and E. J. Gwynn, *Catalogue of the Irish manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Dublin* (Dublin 1921) 318–20; for commentary see Francoise Henry and Geneviève Marsh-Micheli, 'Manuscripts and illuminations, 1169–1603', in *A new history of Ireland* II, 781–815. Book of O'Hara: NLI MS G 1303; Lambert J. McKenna (ed.), *The Book of O'Hara: Leabhar Í Eadhra* (Dublin 1951).
13 Eleanor Knott (ed.), *The bardic poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn* (2 vols, London 1922, 1926) Poem 17.

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14 Ibid., Poem 32; McKenna, *Book of O'Hara* Poem 2.
15 Colm Lennon, *Richard Stanihurst the Dubliner 1547–1618: a biography with a Stanihurst text On Ireland's Past* (Dublin 1981) 37.
16 Tomás Ó Raghallaigh, 'Seanchus Burcach', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society* 13/2 (1927) 37–64, 129–38: 56.
17 NLI MS G 992, f. 2v. The date 1577 is repeated in inscriptions at ff. 5r and 8v.
18 This confirms Dáibhí I. Ó Cróinín's suggestion in 'A poem to Toirdhealbhach Luinneach Ó Néill', *Éigse* 16 (1975–6) 50–66.
19 It was used in prose in single column from early-Christian times, and this usage continued to the end of the 16th century.
20 A transcript of the Nugent manuscript was made in the 17th century, and this transcript (RIA MS 23 D 14) is of great value, especially where the text in the original became faded or was subsequently lost.
21 N.J.A. Williams, *The poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe* (London 1980) Poem XVI.
22 Ibid., Poem XVII.
23 His religious work is published as Poems 63–7 in Lambert McKenna (ed.), *Aithdioghluim dána* 2 Vols (Dublin 1939, 1940). The elegy is acephalous in the Nugent manuscript (f. 42), but is complete with ascription in 23 D 14; for Eóghan Ó Cobhthaigh see Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh, 'A poem to Rudhraighe Caoch Ó Mórdha, lord of Laois 1542–7', *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 4 (2010) 158–84.
24 Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh, 'A poem to Aodh Buidhe and Alasdar Mac Domhnaill of Tinnakill, Queen's County', *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 2 (2006) 44–64.
25 Anne O'Sullivan, 'The Tinnakill duanaire', *Celtica* 11 (1976) 214–28.
26 A fourth poem is the 18th-century addition addressed to Ruibeard: see Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Cead pleanála á lorg ag file', *Celtica* 21 (1990) 456–60.
27 Éamonn Ó Tuathail, 'Nugentiana', *Éigse* 2 (1940–41) 4–14: 5 n. 10.
28 Cf. Brian Ó Cuív, *The Irish bardic duanaire or 'poem–book'* (Dublin 1974) 13.
29 Séamas P. Ó Mórdha, 'Manuscript and scribal traditions in Meath', *Ríocht na Midhe* 15 (2004) 66–82: 78; Pól Breathnach, 'Janet Marward, 1562–1629', *The Irish Book Lover* 24 (1936) 99–104.
30 Ó Tuathail, 'Nugentiana'; Gerard Murphy, 'Poems of exile by Uilliam Nuinseann mac Barúin Dealbhna', *Éigse* 6 (1948–52) 8–15.
31 Ó Tuathail, 'Nugentiana', 7.
32 Thomas F. O'Rahilly, *Measgra dánta* (Cork 1927) Poem 50.
33 David Greene, *Duanaire Mhéig Uidhir* (Dublin 1972); Pádraig Ó Macháin, *Téacs agus údar i bhFilíocht na Scol* (Dublin 1998) 43–6.
34 Helen Coburn Walshe, 'The rebellion of William Nugent, 1581', in R. V. Comerford et al. (ed.), *Religion, conflict and coexistence in Ireland: essays presented to Monsignor Patrick J. Corish* (Dublin 1990) 26–52; Vincent P. Carey, *Surviving the Tudors: the 'wizard' earl of Kildare and English rule in Ireland, 1537–1586* (Dublin 2002) 207; Pádraig Ó Macháin, 'The hand of Conall Ó Mórdha', *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 3 (2008) 54–72: 62–5.

35 Standish Hayes O'Grady and Robin Flower, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the British Museum* (3 vols., London 1926, 1953) I, 406.
36 Parthalán Mac Aogáin (ed.), *Graiméir Ghaeilge na mBráthar Mionúr* (Dublin 1968).
37 Osborn Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry* (ed. David Greene and Fergus Kelly, Dublin 1970) Poems 35 and 36.

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38 Colm Lennon, 'The Nugent family and the Diocese of Kilmore in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries', *Breifne* 9 (1999–2001) 360–74: 371–3.
39 Benjamin Hazard, ' ''An Ark in the Deluge'': Multyfarnham Abbey and the Nugents of Delvin, 1607–41', *Ríocht na Midhe* 22 (2011) 113–23.
40 Cuthbert Mhág Craith, *Dán na mBráthar Mionúr* (2 vols, Dublin 1967, 1980) Poem 21.2; Mac Cionnaith, *Dioghluim dána*, Poem 122.2.
41 Ó Tuathail, 'Nugentiana', 8–11.
42 John and J.A. Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses* I/3 (Cambridge 1924) 271; *Complete Peerage*, 174, which source declines to declare in favour of Christopher being either the 9th or the 14th Baron Devlin, explaining that the descent of this barony is obscure.
43 Brian Ó Cuív (ed.), *Aibidil Gaoidheilge & Caiticiosma: Seaán Ó Cearnaigh's Irish Primer of Religion published in 1571* (Dublin 1994). Kearney matriculated (Magdalene College) 1561, graduated B.A. 1565.
44 Ibid., 11–13, 56.
45 Fearghus Ó Fearghail, 'The Irish New Testament of 1602 in its European context', *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 31 (2008) 77–107: 84–5; Ó Cuív, *Aibidil*, 2.
46 Brian Ó Cuív, *Irish dialects and Irish speaking districts* (Dublin 1951) 14.
47 Dermot McGuinne, *Irish type design: a history of printing types in the Irish character* (Dublin 1992) 4–22.
48 John T. Gilbert, *Facsimiles of national manuscripts of Ireland* I–IV (Dublin 1874–84) IV/1 pp. xxxiv–xl, and item no. XXII.
49 See E. P. Shirley, *Catalogue of the library at Lough Fea, in illustration of the history and antiquities of Ireland* (London 1872) 88. The manuscript bears the Lough Fea bookplate inside the front cover.
50 Gilbert, *Facsimiles*, p. xxxv.
51 See similar signatures in John F. Ainsworth and Edward MacLysaght, 'Nugent papers', *Analecta Hibernica* 20 (1958) 126–215: 132 and 133.
52 Rita Copeland and Inke Shuiter (ed.), *Medieval grammar and rhetoric: language arts and literary theory AD 300–1475* (Oxford 2009) 96.
53 Myles Dillon, 'History of the preverb *to*', *Éigse* 10 (1962) 120–26: 123–4.
54 Breandán Ó Buachalla, 'The relative particle *Do*', *ZCP* 29 (1962–4) 106–13: 111.
55 Patricia Palmer, *Language and conquest in early modern Ireland* (Cambridge 2001) 65.
56 Breandán Ó Buachalla, '*Annála Ríoghachta Éireann* is *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*: an comhthéacs comhaimseartha', *Studia Hibernica* 22 and 23 (1982–3) 59–105: 76–7; Hiram Morgan, 'Giraldus Cambrensis and the Tudor conquest of Ireland', in idem (ed.), *Political ideology in Ireland, 1544–1641* (Dublin 1999) 22–44.
57 Gary Taylor et al., *Thomas Middleton and early modern textual culture: a companion to the Collected Works* (Oxford 2007) 202–5. On the combination of the ABC and the catechism in the Tudor period see Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: catechisms and catechizing in England c.1530–1740* (Oxford 1996) 174–8.
58 Figures for importation of hornbooks into the south of Ireland at this time are given in Raymond Gillespie, 'The book trade in southern Ireland, 1590–1640', in Gerard Long (ed.), *Books beyond the Pale* (Dublin 1996) 1–17: 13.
59 Osborn Bergin, 'Irish grammatical tracts I. Introductory', *Ériu* 8 (1915–16) Supplement, 3–4.
60 Mac Aogáin, *Graiméir*, 109.
61 Ó Cuív, *Aibidil*, 58–67.

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62 These are earlier examples than those recorded in the account of the letter *P* in the Royal Irish Academy's *Dictionary of the Irish Language*; see also R. A. Breatnach, 'A poem on rime in scholastic verse', *Éigse* 3 (1941–2) 36–51: 48 n. 17c. The bardic grammarians referred to *p* as 'beithe bogtha', unvoiced *b*.
63 Mac Aogáin, *Graiméir*, 4 (with variant readings). Such an argument would presuppose the existence of Ó hEódhusa's text, or something similar, as early as *c*. 1563. Note that *a*, *o*, *u* are earlier (f. 7v) described as 'magnas seu latus' by Nugent.
64 For analysis of the bardic divisions of consonants see Brian Ó Cuív, 'The phonetic basis of classical modern Irish rhyme', *Ériu* 20 (1966) 94–103.
65 This group includes three realisations of *c*: *c*, *k* (ca), and *q* (cu).
66 Bergin, 'Grammatical tracts', 5.12; Ó Cuív, *Aibidil*, 64, 161–3.
67 Ó Cuív, *Aibidil*, 14. The formation of the word required no great ingenuity as it is merely a compound of *coll* (the name for the letter c) and *ailm* (a), which combination the symbol represents, sometimes standing for the word *cath*; see Colm Ó Baoill, 'Scotticisms in a manuscript of 1467', *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 15 (1988) 122–39: 122–3.

68 Basil Iske [Elizabeth *Hickey*], *The green cockatrice* (Tara 1978) 20; Seán P. Ó Mathúna, *William Bathe, S.J., 1564–1614: a pioneer in linguistics* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia 1986) 148. For an account of the various events and presentations during the queen's visit to Cambridge, 5–10 August 1564, see John Nicholls, *The progresses and public processions of Queen Elizabeth* (3 vols, London 1823) I, 149–89.
69Victor Morgan, *A history of the University of Cambridge volume II: 1546–1750* (Cambridge 2004) 136. The combination of Latin, Greek and Hebrew in the text might also be suggestive of Kearney's involvement, as good knowledge of the first two (Ó Fearghail, 'New Testament', 91), and probably also of the third, would be expected of someone charged with translating the New Testament into Irish. Certainly a later participant in that and other translation projects, Uilliam Ó Domhnaill, was noted as 'excellently learned in the Hebrew, Greek and Latin': Fearghus Ó Fearghail, 'Uilliam Ó Domhnaill's Irish version of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1608) and his Old Testament translations into Irish', *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association* 32 (2009) 99–130: 102.
70 Martin Billingsley, *The Pens Excellencie or the Secretaries Delighte* (London 1618) f. [10]r.
71 David Cressy, *Literacy and the social order*: *reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge 1980) 123.
72 For comments on aspects of this paper I thank Dr Aoibheann Nic Dhonnchadha, Dr Fearghus Ó Fearghail, and Prof. Dolores O'Higgins.