GLUTTONY, LUST AND PENANCE IN THE B-TEXT OF AISLINGE MEIC CONGLINNE

AISLINGE Meic Conglinne (AMC) is a Middle Irish vision narrative surviving in two manuscripts: TCD MS 1337 (H. 3. 18) (H) and RIA MS 23 P 16 (An Leabhar Breac) (B).¹ The manuscripts bear witness to divergent recensions, the relationship of which Wilhelm Wollner addresses in sections I-II of his introduction to Kuno Meyer’s edition and translation.² Although both recensions derive from a single source, the B-text is significantly more detailed than H and, notwithstanding its internal inconsistencies, constitutes a more sophisticated rendering of the same story.³ Because it betrays elements of immram, echtrae, aisling, heroic, satiric, hagiographic and goliardic literature, AMC cannot be fitted exclusively into one genre. Clearly, the author mocks either the literary conventions or the socio-political reality of his day in a tale of considerable complexity. Yet despite its obvious merits, AMC has remained virtually unstudied.⁴ Therefore, by exploring a ubiquitous thematic element, namely Patristic views of sin and its remission, the following analysis attempts both to fill a gap in the literary criticism of the B-text of AMC and to offer an interpretation consonant with its many idiosyncracies.

Although Dillon and Hull independently proposed on linguistic grounds that the Leabhar Breac version of AMC was written sometime in the first half of the twelfth century, no undisputed date of composition has ever been substantiated.⁵ Nevertheless, the text was certainly extant

¹ For a description of the MSS. see (B) RIA Cat. Ir. Mss., pp. 3379-404; text: pp. 213a-219b; (H) Gwynn Cat., pp. 140-58, esp. 156, no. 732. The abbreviations B and H have been employed throughout this article. Other abbreviations used are: PL (J. P. Migne, Patrologia Latina, Paris, 1844-55); PG-L (Patrologia Graeco-Latina, Paris, 1857-66).

² K. Meyer & W. Wollner, Aislinge Meic Conglinne, London, 1892, p. x, with references cited in the format: page: line. This edition will soon be superseded by Prof. Jackson’s forthcoming work. The primacy of the recensions has been the subject of some discussion, but V. Hull (‘The Verbal System of Aislinge Meic Conglinne’, ZCP xxix (1962-4) 378) convincingly demonstrates that H antedates B. See below, n. 5.

³ Meyer, pp. xiv-xxxix. Some of Wollner’s remarks can be entertained only with reservations. For example, nothing militates against Mac Conglinne’s challenging the servant at Cork to compose a quatrain on his rations, and Aníer’s comment, ‘mo breith inn-dóchum na Sábrainne festa’ (25:10), is hardly out of context (see p. xvi) where it currently appears.


⁵ Hull (p. 378) claims that the terminus ad quem of AMC ‘cannot be later than the first quarter of the twelfth century’ and that the text was probably composed, or at least written down, around 1100. Myles Dillon, however, (‘Nominal Predicates in Irish’, ZCP xvi (1927) 315-56) dates AMC to c. 1150. The precise chronology of AMC’s composition and transmission is admittedly questionable.
before 1411, at which time it was copied into *Leabhar Breac* on pages 213-19 (quire XI).\(^4\) A marginal entry on p. 212 suggests that its exemplar may have been the lost Book of Berchan of the Cluain held at Cluain Sostai, now Clonsast, Offaly.\(^7\) *Leabhar Breac* is largely comprised of *vitae* and *passiones* (mainly of the Apostles), homilies (on subjects associated principally with Lent and Easter), and biblical exegesis.\(^4\) AMC is at once an anomalous and germane addition to this relatively unified compilation, and its manuscript context suggests that it shares some structural and thematic affiliations with the other writings in *Leabhar Breac*. Because of its comic posture, however, AMC should be viewed as a parody of the ecclesiastical texts and critical methodology represented in *Leabhar Breac*. Certain resonances between the *Leabhar Breac* passions and Aniér Mac Conglinne’s persecution, between Aniér’s gluttony and the *Leabhar Breac* homilies on abstinence and fasting, and between Cathal’s hunger and passages of the *Sermo ad Reges* imply that AMC should be interpreted as a parody of homiletic and hagiographic literature, rather than as the mere burlesque remonstrances of a vagus. Indeed, with its observation that place, person, time and *causa scribendi* ought to be asked of a composition, the opening of the text parodies a typical introduction of homilies and exegetical treatises: \(^9\)

*Cethardai as quindesta dach elathain, issed as quindesta don eladain se i locc [ocus persu] ocus aimser ocus fath airicc.\(^10\)*

In addition to AMC’s manuscript context, then, its first sentence implies that a symbolic religious (but not necessarily tropological) interpretation is a rewarding approach to understanding the text.

Nevertheless, AMC is not an allegory of orthodox Christian dogma. On the contrary, the author has conflated certain aspects of Christian

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\(^{9}\) Thirty-six passions, lives and homilies are edited in R. Atkinson, *The Passions and the Homilies from Leabhar Breac*, Dublin (TLS vol. II), 1887. J. Kenney (Sources for the Early History of Ireland, New York, 1929, pp. 262, 272, 739) provides sources for texts edited from *Leabhar Breac*.


\(^{11}\) Meyer, 3:1-3. ‘The four things to be asked of every composition must be asked of this composition, viz., place, [and person], and time, and cause of invention.’
doctrine which he condemned or thought exceptionally apt vehicles of satire. In my mind the writer was at least as successful in welding together a number of disparate Christian elements as he was in marshalling a range of genres, which compound the satire of the Church’s intellectual and spiritual institutions. Hence, AMC’s interpretation depends on the separation of Christian elements from native genres, a task most easily accomplished by scrutinizing its treatment of gluttony, a pervasive motif. As I hope to demonstrate, understanding the Christian significance of gluttony greatly enhances our appreciation of the narrative.

The B-text opens with a brief excursus on the demonic possession of Cathal Mac Finguine,11 which resulted from his first-love for Lígach, the sister of his political rival. A demon of gluttony (‘Ion cráéis’) forms in Cathal’s throat, and the king begins to impoverish Munster with his unyielding hunger. The central figure of the tale, Aniér Mac Conglinne, is subsequently introduced as a vagus, a scholar-cleric with such a reputation as a satirist that he bears the hypocoristic name Aniér (lit. ‘no-refusal’), since no one can refuse his wish for fear of being slandered.12 Tired of his hardship as a student and eager to glut himself at Cathal’s well-provisioned table, Aniér leaves his cell to become a poet at the king’s court; but after insulting the monks of Cork over the poor hospitality they provided him on his sojourn, he is beaten and condemned to crucifixion. While awaiting his death, Mac Conglinne has an angelic vision in which he visits a world of animate food to cure himself of his gluttony. He persuades Abbot Manchín (lit. ‘little monk’) to release him from death, for by his vision he hopes to cure Cathal. Aniér receives an audience from the king whom he tricks into fasting for two days. The king is then immobilized, and the demon of gluttony tempted from his throat both by the choice morsels Mac Conglinne holds before Cathal’s mouth and by the tantalizing descriptions in the student’s vision. A cauldron is overturned on the demon, and Aniér is rewarded for saving Ireland from ruin.

Describing Cathal’s ‘first love’ (‘cétshercus écmaise’) for Lígach and the nature of the bewitched apples she is compelled to send him, the prologue of AMC summarily introduces the gluttony motif. Eating the apples causes small creatures (‘mila’) to form in Cathal’s belly, and these

11 G. Murphy (Saga and Myth in Ancient Ireland, Dublin, 1955, pp. 55-6) provides a list of tales relating to the reign of King Cathal which includes Mór Muman ocus Aided Cíanach maic Cellchéin and Cath Almaine.

12 Fear of the satirist’s power to slander is well documented in F. Robinson, ‘Saturists and Enchanters in Early Irish Literature’ in D. Lyon & G. Moore, Studies in the Histories of Religions, New York, 1912. The name Aniér derives from an (neg. part.) + éra (‘denial’). For a history of the vagus figure, see H. Waddell, The Wandering Scholars, London, 1927.
animals unite to form the demon of gluttony (‘Ion cráéis’).\textsuperscript{13} Significantly, both the source and the cure of Cathal’s gluttony originate in the power of a scoilaise, whose peculiar ministrations seem ominously to transcend the might of evil forces. Apple imagery recurs in a later episode (p. 49 f.) during which Cathal hurls apples at Aníer in response to the student’s request for food. Here the author intentionally links Cathal’s and Mac Conglinne’s debility by having them eat the food which caused the king’s gluttony.\textsuperscript{14}

In conjunction with Ligach’s conscious betrayal of her lover (‘ar cia bóí dia sheircc ocus gráid Cathail meic Fhinguine aice, rop ómun lee mallacht a bráthar día rochtain’),\textsuperscript{15} the apple-gluttony motif preserves reminiscences of the story of Adam and Eve. Ligach sends Cathal the apples which cause his gluttony in a manner suggesting the temptation of Adam and the principal act of original sin (implied in his gluttony). In echtrae tales, appreciably influenced by popular conceptions of the Christian paradise, the apple regularly denotes temptation.\textsuperscript{16} Since in a Christian hermeneutic it signifies transgression and sinfulness as well, apple imagery becomes particularly apposite in the context of Cathal’s rapacious hunger.\textsuperscript{17} Gluttony was commonly linked to original sin, which was itself an act of consumption and an abrogation of restraint in Christian doctrine.

A long and complex Patristic tradition traced original sin to eating or (as it was commonly exaggerated) to gluttony, for the fall was fre-

\textsuperscript{13} Ion cráéis presents some interpretative problems. Cráéis (gen. sing. crá(e)is, m. o-stem) may mean either ‘gluttony, greed, excessive eating’ or ‘mouth, throat’ (see DIL s.v.). The m. o-stem lon commonly means ‘blackbird’ and may in the context mean ‘demon in the form of a blackbird’. This reading is supported by an interlinear gloss on Sattan: ‘i. lon cráis bóí ina bragait’. According to P. Scott (‘Alcuin’s Versus de Cuculo’, Studies in Philology 62 (1965) 510-30), ‘the raven was not only the antithesis of the dove of the waking spirit and associated with death, he was an exegetical blazon of the devil . . .’ For the blackbird as a symbol of Satan or of evil, see Ambrose, Liber de Noe et Arca (PL XIV: 381); Augustine, Liber Annot. in Iob (PL XXXIV: 825); Bruno Astensis, Super Pentateuc. in Gen. (cap. VIII); Chrysostom, Sermo in Pentec. de Spiritu Sancto; Anastasius Sinai, Contempl. Anagog. in Hexamer. (liber I).

\textsuperscript{14} This episode becomes salient when Mac Conglinne is said to be hungry on account of his original sin (see below, p. 62).

\textsuperscript{15} Meyer, 5:18-20. ‘. . . for great as was her love and affection for Cathal Mac Finguine, she feared her brother’s curse reaching her.’

\textsuperscript{16} J. Carney, Studies in Irish Literature and History, Dublin, 1979, pp. 276-94, and P. Mac Cana, ‘The Sinless Otherworld of Imnram Brain’, Ériu xxvii (1976) 95-115. The parallels between the Christian and secular elysia are not as conspicuous as these authors have posited (see below, n. 24).

quently interpreted as the immediate consequence of eating. The notion of sinfulness conjoined with consumption/gluttony gained wide currency throughout medieval Europe, where it was promulgated in sermon literature. The tradition underlying Archbishop Wulfstan’s homily *De Christianitate*, in which he states, ‘itaque, fratres, cauete et gulam, per quam primus homo de paradiso eiecut est’,\(^1\) owes its foundation to a universal typological explication of the fall of man and the temptation of Christ. Adam’s defeat in paradise was thought to prefigure Christ’s triumph in the desert. A *Leabhar Breac* homily on the temptation elucidates the type and antitype:

Uair aútgart bás ocus malarta na ndóine .i. Adam, uair do-romaitl
do thorud in chriond toirmesdcha i n-agaid toile Dé, ro-hindarbad
aire-sin a pardus. Uair is tria duaigaí din in chrails do-rochramar a
failtib parduis, is s-ed dlegair din co ro-tathcuirem doridise cos-na
failtib-sín tria áine ocus abstanait.\(^1\)

Similarly, the *Leabhar Breac* ‘Passion of St. Bartholomew’ declares:

O ro-genair din mac Dé, ol Partholon, ro-p áil dó a aimshugud o
diabal, co ro-chlóí Crist tria áine is-in dithrub in tir ro-clóí Adam i
Parr dus tria cráes.\(^2\)

An eleventh-century lyric poem further illuminates the nature of gluttony and original sin as it was predicated by the Fathers. In ‘I am Eve’, a dramatic monologue uttered by Eve, the woman confesses that taking the apple obviated the restraint of her gluttony:

Mé tuc in n-uball an-úas; do-chúaid tar cumang mo chráis.\(^2\)

Here gluttony is explained as a consequence of man’s fall, inasmuch as eating the interdicted fruit led to the corruption of concupiscence. In all of these examples we can see how the inherited nature of original sin and


\(^{2}\) *PH*, p. 179. ‘Auctor enim mortis nostrae per fructum ligni utitii utiae praeepta transgressus est; qui ergo a paradisi gauditis per cibum cecidimus, ad haec in quantum possimus per abstinentiam resurgamus.’

\(^{2}\) Ibid., p. 97. ‘After He was born, it was His will to be tempted of the devil, so that Christ conquered through fasting in the desert him who overcame Adam in paradise through gluttony.’ A similar view is expressed in ‘The Passion of the Apostle Andrew’, p. 108.

\(^{2}\) G. Murphy, *Early Irish Lyrics*, Oxford, pp. 50-1, 193-4: ‘It is I who plucked the apple; it overcame the control of my gluttony.’
the vice of *gula* inform much of the first half of AMC. Ultimately, Jerome’s famous letter *Ad Eustochium* neatly summarizes this theme, which has numerous parallels elsewhere:

> Alioquin ad exemplum horum, poteris tibi ipsa colligere, quomodo primus de paradiso homo, ventri magis obiediens, quam Deo, in hanc lacrymarum dejectus est vallem. Et ipsum Dominum Satanas famae tentaverit in deserto. Et Apostolus clamitet: “Escae ventri, et venter escis: Deus autem hunc et illas destruet [1 Cor. 6:13].” Et de luxuriosis, “quorum Deus venter est [Phil. 3:19].” Id enim colit unusquisque, quod diligit. Ex quo sollicite providendum est, ut quos saturitas de paradiso expulit, reducat esuries.\(^{22}\)

Hence, AMC commences with a fall-story that exaggerates the outcome of eating the forbidden fruit. But what of the motivations? Mac Cana has demonstrated that ‘sexual and alimentary licence’ is a customary feature of *echtrae* literature.\(^{23}\) Lured from his homeland by a magic apple proffered by a fairy-woman, the man in an *echtrae* tale encounters a sinless Elysium where sexual commerce and satiety are wholeheartedly embraced.\(^{24}\) Yet such a paradise does not typify the world of AMC. Instead, it owes more to a Christian evaluation of sexuality, which was deemed impure and sinful. Thus Eve becomes an agent of degradation in *Genesis*, and her presence introduces a sexual component into the creation myth. Similarly, Lígach’s role in AMC reflects that of Eve in Eden, as the indirect cause of Cathal’s gluttony is his ‘céstharcus écmaise’ which he arouses:

> Is hé tra fáth aircc in luin cráis i m-brágait Cathail meic Fhinghuinte: daig bói céstharcus écmaise dó fria Lígaig ingin Móile Dún rig Ollig ...

\(^{22}\) PL XXII: 400.

\(^{23}\) Mac Cana, at 110 and *passim*.

\(^{24}\) Perhaps the best example is *Echtrae Chonlai*. Carney claims (*Studies*, p. 292) that ‘the apple . . . implies the magic tree in the Otherworld, doubtless a borrowing of the Tree of Life in *Genesis*.’ If so, there is little correspondence between the pagan Otherworld and the Christian paradise, for the apple is not a symbol of the Tree of Life but of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Moreover, the Christian paradise before the fall did not witness the sexual freedom that characterizes so many secular Otherworld depictions. In Eden the protoplasts were undoubtedly chaste, and Mac Cana’s imputation (p. 100) that the sinless sexuality of the Otherworld (specifically in *Imram Brain*) is related to a ‘continuation of man’s primitive condition before he tasted of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil’ slighted Christian teaching on the subject. Mac Cana’s work, however, goes far towards unravelling the strands of native and Christian borrowings in early Irish accounts of the Otherworld.

\(^{25}\) Meyer, 3:20-2. ‘The reason of the demon of gluttony being in the throat of Cathal Mac Finguine was, because he had, though he had never seen her, a first-love for Ligach, daughter of Maelduin, king of Ailech.’
If ‘cétshercus écmaise’, literally ‘first love of absence’, can be read as ‘original or primal profane love’, then one interpretation of Cathal’s possession may derive from that ‘literature [which] hints at an interpretation of the [Genesis] story which would regard the first sin as connected with sexual desire’. Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 200) in his Protrepticus and Stromata professed an interpretation of the fall as resulting from premature primal lust, and in a letter contra Gnosticism he writes that man was corrupted through sexual desire. Clement may have based his philosophy on Judaic beliefs current in his day. For example, the popular pseudepigraph The Apocalypse of Abraham implies that it was a sexual union between Adam and Eve which caused their expulsion from Paradise. Other non-canonical treatises and pseudepigrapha suggest that Eve engaged in a sexual liaison with the serpent. In the fourth century Augustine never claimed that original sin was a direct result of sexual intercourse, but the connection in his writings between concupiscence and original sin seems at times to equate it with libidinous passion. According to Williams, Augustine’s attitude constitutes ‘a high-water mark of a tendency which we have noticed running all through the history of Fall-speculation, both Jewish and Christian’. Finally, two centuries after Clement and contemporary with Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa links the fall of man to sex, though his argument in De Hominis Opificio is more subtle. Man, he claims, was given the capacity to reproduce because God foresaw his corruption. The subsequent fall, then, witnessed the birth of evil as the oblique result of sexuality. Clearly, this doctrine was more rarified than Clement’s, but the essential elements juxtaposing passion and sin are nevertheless present.

Hence, some evidence suggests that Cathal’s love, possession and gluttony may represent a satiric treatment of Patristic interpretations of the fall of man. Indeed, we need not look far for corroborative evidence regarding the connection between hunger and original sin in AMC.

26 F. Tennant, The Sources of the Doctrine of the Fall and Original Sin, Cambridge, 1903, p. 67. On sexuality in Eden, see L. Hartman (‘Sin in Paradise’) and the thirty-three references he cites in fn. 2.
27 Clement of Alexandria Stromata 3.17, 3.15; Protrepticus, XV: iii.
29 See, e.g., Origen’s Commentary on the Canticles III for references to the inquitinamentum. Eve’s seduction by the serpent is detailed in 2 Enoch (Slavonic) and explored by St Paul in such passages as 2 Cor. 9:2-3.
30 Augustine rejects the fall of man as the outcome of sexuality in De Gen. ad Lit. (PL XXXIV:452). Augustine’s work nevertheless links sex and concupiscence with the human lapsus, as in Williams, p. 366: ‘“Original sin” (considered as vitium) = “concupiscence” = “sexual passion”.’
31 Williams, p. 366 fn. 3.
narrator remarks on two occasions that original sin is the source of Aniér's hunger and discomfort:

(a) Issed ró-imfulaing, in comhrargu bunatta ocus a p[h]eccad búnadgendi ocus a mírath follusgnéethech fodéin, corerfluirted cen dig cen biad cen inlat, co n-dechaid cach duine i Corc-caig ina immdaid.33

(b) Ocus is ann n támic a cholmarcu bunata ocus a p[h]eccad follusgnéethech fén fri[s]-sium. Robenad ulidetaid a étai de, ocus rogbad slipre ocs uchlusca dó.34

It is only in the post-lapsarian world that humanity need worry about physical comfort, and in these passages Aniér's dissatisfaction is attributed directly to his concupiscence.

In *Leabhar Breac* there survives a prose redaction of *Saltair na Rann* which records the Old Irish Adam and Eve legend.35 Interestingly, the text highlights the necessity of eating for the expelled protoplasts:

Ar atam cena i n-ar peinn ocs atbelam di fuact ocs gortai cen biad, cen etac.36
Bui din Adam sectmain iar n-a dicus a Partus cen etac, cen dig, cen biad, cen tec, cen tenid . . .37

Again, food becomes an essential part of existence only after the act of sin, just as in AMC it becomes a thematic nexus after Cathal’s possession. We need only point to the verbal resonances between AMC and *Scéil Saltrach na Rann* in the phrases 'cen biad' and 'cen dig' to demonstrate how closely Aniér's sinfulness is allied with that of Adam and

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33 Meyer, 13:15-19. 'This came of original sin, and Mac Conglinne's hereditary sin and his own plain-working bad-luck; so that he was detained without drink, without food, without washing, until every man in Cork had gone to his bed.'

34 Ibid., 19:6-10. 'And then it was that his hereditary transgression and his own plain-working sin rose against Mac Conglinne. The whole of his clothing was stripped off him, and scourges and horsewhips were laid on him.'


36 MacCarthy, p. 62. 'For we are already in punishment and we are dying of cold and hunger, without food, without raiment.'

37 Ibid., p. 37. 'Now, was Adam [for] a week after his expulsion from Paradise without raiment, without drink, without food, without house, without fire . . .' See also the commentary in B. Murdoch, *The Irish Adam and Eve Story from Saltair na Rann* (vol. II), Dublin, 1976, p. 105.
Eve. Thus Aníér is himself linked to Cathal in a manner characterizing the post-lapsarian reflexes of original sin, and in the passages quoted above the inherited quality of sin receives special notice from the narrator in the phrase ‘hereditary transgression’. Therefore, when the scholar later constructs an elaborate food pedigree for Manchin, he is not only satirizing the Abbot but also fixing the cause of his sins in Adam’s sin. The pedigree of food is especially significant because all sins originated in the act of eating and because original sin is transmitted through sexuality.

Another relevant Patristic attitude linking gluttony with sex held that all sins, being the result of varying degrees of human incontinence (incontinentia), derived from one another. The Fathers explicitly detailed their generation from the mother of all vices, gula. Johannus Cassianus writes in his celebrated Collationes that Adam's first temptation was polyphagous, and he believed gula and fornicatio the most difficult sins to eradicate because they were "natural" sins. Books V and VI of the Collationes figure prominently in establishing gluttony as the most nefarious sin, but Cassian’s earlier De Coenobium Institutis had witnessed the origin of the notion.

Cassian is the foremost proponent of gluttony as the worst sin, and most of the influential fourth-century Christian apologists held a modified and less dogmatic view of the primacy of sins. Instead, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome (and to some extent Cassian) investigated the cause of sin, which they ascribed to concupiscencia and incontinentia. Incontinence was the inability to control base desire, to limit the physical demands of the body (concupiscence) which resulted from original sin. By incontinence all sins are perpetrated, and we may therefore see the properly denoted Augustinian view of incontinentia informing 'I am Eve'. Eve loses the cumang to restrain her desire, which is expressed in the sin of gluttony - the primal sin. This brief poem deftly expresses the Augustinian doctrine of concupiscence inculcated by the eating of the apple.

And yet to the fourth-century Fathers, gluttony was merely one aspect of a lack of cumang. All excessive desires – for food, for wealth,
for sex - emanated from man’s fall, from his consequent concupiscence and from his incontinence. Sprouting from one another, then, all sins became variations on the same theme. Thus Jerome claims, ‘in vino luxuria, in luxuria voluptas, in voluptate impudicitia est’. And Ambrose his contemporary affirmed in De Paradiso, ‘Non habebat continentiam qui de interdico sibi gustaverat ligno’, and ‘delectatio . . . prima est origo peccati . . . ’ In his tract De Cain et Abel Ambrose compares the gluttonous, avaricious and libidinous predilections, which derive from concupiscencia and incontinentia. They were all, of course, only reiterating a fashionable sentiment which Augustine expounded in the greatest detail.

Augustine emphasized concupiscence as the origin of sinfulness: concupiscence was the desire, continence the control of it. In his De Libero Arbitrio Augustine declares, ‘Quis enim recte vituperaverit fructus terrae, quod homines eis non utantur bene, corruptique vitio suo, corruptum eos abutendo ad luxuriam’, and in the Enchiridion, ‘Ex his morborum, non ubertatis sed indigentiae tamquam fontibus omnibus miseria naturae rationalis emanat’. In these citations we see that Augustine treated gluttony as a single aspect of concupiscence, but, most critically, that concupiscence was the result of original sin. Passages in the Confessiones, too, could be adduced to show Augustine’s interpretation of evil, but they are hardly necessary. The notion of concupiscence and continence permeated religious thought throughout the Middle Ages as the question of original sin and original guilt was debated.

The particular relevance of incontinentia and concupiscencia to AMC should be readily apparent. By an act mirroring original sin, Cathal is possessed, gains concupiscence and lacks continence to control his appetite. Cathal’s gluttony, then, is an emblem of Augustinian parody, a satire of Patristic thought on the nature of sinfulness. The lack of restraint (continence) characterizing Eve in ‘I am Eve’ and Cathal in AMC is identical in both instances. Mac Conglínne participates in Cathal’s sinfulness, too, inasmuch as his hunger (and later his gluttony) are an indirect outcome of his inherited corruption. Significantly, both Aníer’s and the king’s gluttony represent Cassian’s most debased sin, and Cassian’s philosophy had the profoundest effect on the Irish penitential tradition. As I shall argue later, the institution of penance is the target of the author’s most complex and venal harangue.

\[44\] PL XIV:307; PL XIV:312.
\[45\] PL XIV:324-8.
\[46\] PL XXXII:1290.
\[47\] PL XL:244.
\[48\] PL XXXII:797-9.
In its emphasis on gluttony, Church satire and lightheartedness, AMC fits well within the tradition of goliardic verse. That goliard and golas may derive from Lat. gula or O. Fr. goliard implies that goliardic poetry frequently addressed gluttony or that its practitioners were themselves gluttons. Perhaps the author of AMC was familiar with the widespread attitude best expressed by Giraldus Cambrensis in his Speculum Ecclesiae:

Item parasitus quidam, Golas nomine, nostris diebus gulositate pariter et lecacitate famosissimus, qui Golas melius quia gulae et crapulae per omnia deditus dici potuit, literatus tamen affatim sed nec bene morigeratus nec bonis disciplinis informatus, in papam et curiam Romanam carmina famosa pluries et plurima, tam metrica quam ridicula, non minus impudenter quam imprudenter evomuit.49

If we can believe the hypothesis that goliardic verse has an Irish inspiration,50 AMC may represent an apotheosis of such literature in its homeland.51 Latin and vernacular goliardic texts such as gluttons’ masses offer instructive parallels which further illumine the role of gluttony in AMC.52 Moreover, Jill Mann has recently delineated certain aspects of goliardic literature which accurately reflect elements in AMC, principally, ‘a Platonic sense of the meaningful parallelism between words and things’, a conscious acknowledgement of the equivocacy of satire as a didactic genre, and the use of authority to justify (and to undercut) the ‘objectivity’ of the text.53 Clearly, AMC preserves a goliardic constituent, but the fall satire lying behind the theme of gluttony is more diaphanous than the satire in any goliardic work known to me. Furthermore, the author of AMC is not content merely to treat the Christian creation myth and primal disobedience. Instead, he pursues his evaluation of sin by satirizing common beliefs about it and by parodying popular literary forms to criticize ecclesiastical perceptions of sin and its annulment.

In the foregoing analysis of gluttony and original sin in AMC, the

50 P. Allen, Medieval Latin Lyrics, Chicago, 1931, pp. 80-96.
51 On these grounds, one would have to postulate a considerably later date of composition than that speculated by Hull and Dillon.
52 For a survey of drunkards’ masses see P. Lehmann, Die Parodie im Mittelalter, Munich, 1922.
53 J. Mann, 'Satiric Subject and Satiric Object in Goliardic Literature', Mittelalterliches Jahrbuch 15 (1980) at 68 and passim (pp. 61-86).
most anomalous feature of the fall satire is Cathal's possession. How can we ascribe possession to original sin if it in no way pertains to the story of Adam and Eve? *Ni ananse.* As it was sometimes treated in Patristic texts, sin was an 'objective power', and frequently 'demons ... were regarded as specific sins or vices'.44 Because particular sins (not necessarily the seven deadly sins) were associated with parts of the body (*inter alia, gula* with the mouth, theft with the hands),55 it became commonplace to perceive sin as the demonic possession of a certain organ or member. No fewer than twelve dominical sayings from the Gospels form the historical basis for a Pauline doctrine of extra-human evil and its possession of the will.46 The origin of satanic influence on man obviously centres on Eve's temptation of Adam as well.

In Ireland the impression that sin resulted from involuntary possession gained great favour, and the *lorica* tradition owes its foundation to the perception of sin as demoniacal manipulation. For example, petitioning Christ to 'guard ... all my members from all snares of the enemy', a *lorica* prayer in an early Anglo-Saxon manuscript (Royal 2 A xx) links sin to satanic influence.57 In a later recension of this *lorica* found in an Irish manuscript (Oxford Bodl. MS Laud misc. 615), a penitent praying to the Lord signs the cross over the parts of his body.58 The orant crosses his mouth and throat (*cróess* as interpreted by Murphy), and although one may argue that the penitent signs himself to prevent his indulgence in sin, it is most likely that the sign of the cross was believed to keep demons from inhabiting a part of the body and perverting it to sin.

The signing of the cross is ostensibly an integral part of exorcism to which the *lorica* prayers trace their origin,59 and crossing the body to prevent possession and its consequent sinfulness is everywhere evident in Irish literature, as, for example, in the *Leabhar Breac* 'Passion of St. Bartholomew': ' ... tabraid sign i croch bench tar bhreog, amal cuchas-[s]a i fiaigdin in templi, ocs regaid cech n-olc uibh'.60 At the conclusion of AMC the demon threatens to possess Aniér, but the scholar quickly

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45 Bloomfield, p. 44. See also PL XL:1355-7.
46 Williams, p. 110.
48 Murphy *Lyrics*, pp. 52-3. As far as I am aware, it was Hughes ('Aspects', p. 54) who first claimed that these texts represent different recensions.
50 *PH*, p. 99. '... make the sign of the cross over your face, as I made over the walls of the temple, and every evil shall depart from you.'
counters, ‘Airde na crochá coimdetta úam-sa’ agaid’. A passage from the *Leabhar Breac* ‘Passion of Longinus’ aptly expresses the potency of the cross as a protective symbol. One demon soberly comments:

\[\ldots\] uair baile na hadarhar Crist no signen a crochá, is and bis ar n-aíltreb-na tria bith sir.\]

Again, one of the most familiar features of hagiographic literature is dispelling demons with the sign of the cross. The saint can also erect a magical barrier with the cross to prevent the imminent attack of a hostile foe. In short, evil and sinfulness were viewed as possession, and the sign of the cross prevented demonic subversion.

Therefore, the ‘demon of gluttony’ in AMC satirizes a dogma relating possession to sin, and consequently the diabolical nature of Cathal’s gluttony emphasizes the role of sin in the text. We may see by his ‘cétsherca éima’ for Ligach and by eating the apple that Cathal is possessed by a demon of inordinate greed. Cathal is still incontinent, though he is also possessed, for the two traditions regarding internal and external evil are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, Pauline theology teaches that man’s sin is both demonic and innate. Therefore, Cathal’s possession cannot be labelled an aberrant feature of a satiric interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve, as it is subsumed neatly into topical attitudes towards sin in general and towards original sin in particular.

A further attitude treated in the narrative, and one shared by loricá prayers as well, is the metaphor of sin as disease. Also extensively satirized in AMC, this Patristic convention ‘fits in with the conception \ldots\ of sin as an objective power’. Supplications or incantations to expel disease from the body may therefore be veiled prayers of exorcism. Scriptural passages like Mt. 9:11-13 and Ps. 40:4-5 inspired this common *topos*, and the Fathers readily adopted it. Ultimately, original sin caused disease and death. In his survey of Patristic writings, Professor

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61 Meyer, 107:4. ‘\ldots the sign of the Lord’s cross between me and thee,’
62 *PH*, p. 62. ‘\ldots for where Christ is not honoured, nor the sign of the cross, there is our dwelling forever.’
65 Bloomfield, p. 28.
66 ‘Et videntes pharisaei dicebant discipulis eius: Quare cum publicanis et peccatoribus manducat magister vester? At Iesus audienti, ait: Non est opus valentibus medicus, sed male habentibus.’ (Mt. 9:11-2); ‘Dominus opem ferat illi super lectum doloris eius universum stratum eius versasti in infirmitate eius. Ego dixi Domine miserere mei sana animam meam quoniam peccavi tibi \ldots\’ (Ps. 40:4-5).
Wiles claims that by Origen’s time (c.a.d. 185-253), ‘the general view was simply that through Adam mankind had contracted the malady of sin’.67 That view does not change throughout the course of theological debate, and indeed Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose and others reaffirmed it. To the Fathers, sin was a disease, and the mortal lapsus the source of contagion.

The metaphor of sin as disease customarily encountered in Patristic literature gave rise to the perception of the priest as physician and penance as medicine. In the Irish penitentials the confessor was considered the ‘physician of souls’ and penance a ‘spiritual medicine’.68 Hughes has noted the ubiquity of the image of Christ as medicus,69 and behind its occurrence in the loricae we may detect a triadic relationship between sin, possession and disease. The metaphor is often exploited in Irish libelli precum, and the homiletic literature of Anglo-Saxon England evinces frequent examples of its use.70 The context of the medical metaphor is almost invariably penitential, inasmuch as the sinner seeks a cure from the priest, his confessor, in the form of absolution. Sincere contrition and penance, we may infer, are the proper remedy for incontinentia, whereas Christ’s grace is the cure for concupiscencia.

The visio of AMC effectively employs this same metaphor of incorporeal healing. Fluxy the phantom relates to Aniér that the cure for his gluttony can only be supplied by the Wizard-Doctor, ‘féith- liaig’:

Éirg ... doc[h]umm in ñiserta ó tūcchad-sa, .i. ñisert indFHÁTHLEGAI, ocus fogéba ann hicc do mian do cach biud at accobor do cræs ocus do chride . . . 71

Furthermore, the narrator comments that Mac Conglinne advances savagely towards his quest, ‘bá dethbair ón, bói do thrumma in galair ocus do therci in legis, do accobar na n-aicidí’.72 In his interview with the Wizard-Doctor, Aniér’s sinful condition (for he is a glutton) is described as a disease (‘galar’), and the scholar vituperates against his own excesses

71 Meyer, 75:26 f. ‘Go to the hermitage from which I have come, even to the hermitage of the Wizard-Doctor, where thy appetite for all kinds of food, which thy gullet and thy heart can desire, will find a cure.’
72 Ibid., 83:29 f. ‘And no wonder, so heavy was the disease, so scant the cure, so great the longing for the remedy.’
in a monologue which one would most likely expect from a penitent confessing his sin of gluttony:

‘Asnédfit ém’, ol Mac Conglinne, ‘indrud mo credba oclus a n-domnúi mifrech mignímach, i.e. carthain caéma, micais michaéma, mian moch-longthi, minchirrad m’ilblass, cnám cárna, bronnud bánbid, géri oclus gorti, itmaire oclus ithemaite lemm mo chuit fodéin, coná gáib greim nó gabáil ina tómlim; doichell oclus dochta, diultad oclus díchonnerclí immónni is leamm fodéin, conad am lista liumm fódrén ocus nach am inmain frisnach áen. Gorta cona cethri fichet fodlaib airsin anúas i.e. dogaillsi, díbe, dál fria hessamna lem ré cách i cénd cách bid, inriud cách bid frim.’  

After hearing Mac Conglinne’s ‘confession’, the Wizard-Doctor, whose profession identifies him both as the physician and metaphorically as the confessor, offers a peculiar and complex cure, saying:

Ar is co tuide[cl]ht duit dom’ disiurt-sa oclus dom’ dúnad don chur sa, béra midchuine latt do tig d’icc do galair, oclus bid slán cáidche de.’  

The Doctor’s satirical remedy may be likened to a penance, which was normally characterized by a fast of some specific duration. But rather than instructing Mac Conglinne to fast, the fáithliaig ironically orders him to glut himself until he can eat no more. The satirical curing scene in many ways imitates aspects of the Celtic institution of private confession and penance, which grew up from the exomologesis or public ceremony of confession and absolution. As Origen remarks on public penance in his second homily on Leviticus,

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71 Ibid., 93:24 f. ‘‘I will tell thee,’’ said Mac Conglinne, ‘‘what it is that shrivels me up and what makes me low-spirited, inactive, even love of good cheer, hatred of bad cheer, desire of eating early, the gnawing of my many fancies, the gnawing of flesh, the consumption of white-meats, greed and hunger. The thirst and voracity which I feel in consuming my food, so that what I eat gives neither satiety nor substance; inhospitality and niggardliness, refusal and uncharitableness regarding what is my own, so that I am a burden to myself and dear to none. Hunger, with its four-and-twenty subdivisions in addition thereto, sadness, niggardliness, anxiety to be welcomed before everybody to all kinds of food, and the injurious effect to me of every food’’.

74 Ibid., 95:15 f. ‘‘But as thou hast come to me to my hermitage and to my fort at this time, thou shalt take home with thee a medicine to cure thy disease, and shall be forever healed therefrom.’

75 Ibid., 101:5 f.

. . . est adhuc et septima, licet dura et laboriosa, per poenitentiam remissio peccatorum . . . cum non erubescit [peccator] sacerdoti Domini indicare peccatum suum, et quaeere medicinam . . .

But Aníér’s confession is a personal affair with parallels drawn from private, not public, remission. Aníér’s demand for a blessing from the Doctor appears to be more appropriate as the initial act in the ritual of private confession, and in a world of living food where he is advised to eat rather than to fast, the Doctor’s cure can only represent a parody of penance for outrageous gluttony.

It is instructive to note that the Wizard-Doctor in the B-text is a secular figure, and no mention is made of any spiritual responsibility. In the H-recension, however, the fáith-liag is called a chief cleric (‘primcléríuich’), and Mac Conglinne’s cure is offered in a chapel. The medical metaphor of the priest/physician who offers a cure of absolution through penance is explicit. The H-recension therefore provides further evidence that the vision in AMC satirizes the Irish penitential tradition by mocking the confession of the sin of gluttony and the absolution of the sinner Aníér.

Nevertheless, Aníér’s absolution by the Wizard-Doctor is merely one of two occurrences of the medical metaphor in the text. In a parallel situation the scholar-satirist himself assumes the role of priest and confessor when he cures Cathal of his uncontrollable appetite. During the curing episode, Mac Conglinne’s role as confessor is strongly hinted, as the demon remarks:

. . . Miná beth dia n-úaisle ocus dia n-écnaidhecht, dia n-ógí ocus dia n-indracus ocus d’immad a n-espoc ocus á n-an[m]charut muintire Corccaige móire Muman ó túchad-su dom’ shaigaid-sea . . .

Even Manchín comments that Mac Conglinne will cure the king with his marvellous vision: ‘úair rofallsiged dam-sa aréir int olic sa fil i Cathal do hic tríasian aísligni sin’. The demon’s observation and Mac Conglinne’s remedy for the king suggest that Aníér is to be viewed as a confessor figure or, at least, as a spiritual doctor.

A large corpus of Latin and vernacular hagiography underlies the author’s treatment of Mac Conglinne as a confessor or healer. As long

" PG-L XII:418.
" Meyer, 105:21-5. ‘Were it not for the nobleness of the monks of great Cork of Munster, and for their wisdom, for their purity and for their honesty, and for the multitude of their bishops and their confessors [emph. add.], from whom thou hast come against me . . . ’
" Ibid., 39:31-2. ‘. . . it was revealed to me last night that this evil which afflicts Cathal would be cured through that vision.’
ago as 1910 Charles Plummer noted the several hagiographic features informing AMC, though his deduction that the text was ‘a satire directed largely against the lives of Irish saints’ is only partly accurate even in regard to both recensions.\footnote{Plummer, p. cxxxvii, fn. 10.} Some of Plummer’s comparisons are:

An enormous appetite and its cure, spells on food, oaths by the elements, poet’s vituperation which is used as a legal sanction, gessa or taboos, accomplishment of a journey in a marvellously short period of time, a stone heated by an angel sitting on it, (mock) pedigrees inserted . . . fasting on persons, bargaining, visions and their interpretation, the faith-liaig or prophet-leech, the story confers . . . many . . . blessings.\footnote{Ibid.}

But Aníér is neither the embodiment of the saint nor of the consummate Christian martyr; he is the satirical representation of Christ. Acting with remarkable humility, the scholar cuts his own passion-tree in an episode that can only be meant ironically to expose his Christ-like virtues, as he himself declares:

\begin{quote}
Acht óenní chena, cid ed bass de, régmtai fri humalóit feib rochóid ar mágistir Ísu Crist fria c[h]ésad.\footnote{Meyer, 27:20-2. ‘Nevertheless, whatever may come of it, we will go in humility, as our Master, Jesus Christ, went to His Passion.’}
\end{quote}

When Aníér is equated with Christ, the analogy between his curing Cathal and Christ’s redemption brings the fall satire to its anticipated conclusion. Through the resurrection Jesus cured humanity suffering under original sin. Similarly, Aníér cures Cathal, who symbolizes the fallen man, the figure of Adam to be released from his demoniacal torment. Hence, the concupiscent man sins and has his iniquity washed from him by a symbol of the superior exorcist, Christ. Mac Conglinne’s sublimation with the Son of God and his portrayal as the archetypal confessor/saint establish a dual symbolism, pairing both original and post-lapsarian sin with heavenly forgiveness.

Although Mac Conglinne displays the attributes of Christ and the demeanor of a Christian saint, his less benevolent qualities as a satirist cannot be dismissed, for in the mock passion particularly an ironic juxtaposition is posed between Aníér’s roles of saint and satirist. The contentious relationship between the saint and satirist pervades Irish literature, though it appears most often in hagiography. Many vernacular vitae and prose tales depict the saint combatting the satirist
or *fili*, who has challenged the former’s divine authority. As the inheritors of the druid’s magico-religious legacy, the *filid* naturally became the secular or pagan counterparts of the Christian saints and frequently opposed their ‘upstart’ rivals. Plummer first recognized the close connection between the saint and druid, whose role the *fili* comes to replace:

The saint is regarded as a more powerful druid; the forces underlying his religion are conceived as magical rather than spiritual or moral, and the objects and ceremonies associated with his creed and worship are only a very superior kind of ‘medicine’.

Interestingly, the druids and physicians in secular literature shared many functions and were frequently denoted by the same compound *fáith-liaig* encountered in AMC. In *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, for example, Conchobar’s personal physician, Fingen Fáith-liaig, can ascertain the name of the man who inflicted a particular wound in a manner reminiscent of Celtic shamanism. The druidic doctor heals the sick with magic, whereas his Christian foil, the saint, cures either through exorcism or confession.

Ultimately, there may be a direct analogy between the druids’ curing of the infirm and Aniér’s exorcism of Cathal. As Robinson makes clear, the *fili* was often a satirist who could affect the physical health of his victim. If the satirist’s power to cause blotches of shame evolved from the druid’s medicinal powers, the satirist may have assumed the druid’s ability to cure as well. Mac Conglinne’s association with the *filid* and his ‘curing’ of Cathal may therefore be related to the druidic function of healing so closely allied with saintliness in Christian circles. Hence the term *scolaige*, describing Aniér and Fergal’s servant who enchanted Líghach’s apple-gifts, possibly refers to an individual trained in a Bardic school, which retained some distant associations with druidic magic and medicine.

Still, we should not minimize the Christian component in Aniér’s healing, for his role as mock-saint or, indeed, as mock-saviour is as equally important as his role as satirist. Unsuccessfully disguising the vestiges of a pagan druid or scandalous poet, Mac Conglinne’s beatified Christian façade artfully criticizes the excesses of each, although the Catholic Church and its role as arbitor between God and mankind bear the greatest ridicule. We may laugh at the facetious antics of a gluttonous satirist, but we cannot condone how the author perceives the treatment of sin and atonement in the Church of his day.

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14 Mac Cana, p. 96.
15 Plummer, p. xciii.
In the final assessment of the satirical subtext in AMC, sin, penance and absolution are comically portrayed, and the cure of gluttony by gluttony questions the nature of sin itself. Even the satirist Aníer’s association with Christ and the saints devalues the audience’s metaphorical perception of sin as disease and absolution as remedy. The priest’s role as confessor is ridiculed in a ‘treatise’ that accuses the medieval Irish Church of hypocrisy. Hence, although AMC airs man’s indulgence in the excesses of sin, the light tone of the work denigrates, even denies, the merit of absolution, a principal function of the Church. It is difficult to speculate on the possible historical or personal motivations of the author, though he may have been guided by the same intellectual forces as the author of Imtheacht na Tromdhamhe or as the goliardic poets.\(^6\) The late Middle Ages also saw an unparallelled florescence of works on the vices and virtues, and Aníer’s vision may well be a vernacular precursor or reflex of these popular parodies.\(^7\) Finally, AMC may be related to a large number of humorous tales like the Middle English Land of Cockayne, in which gluttony constitutes the primary conceit.\(^8\)

Nevertheless, despite all these possible parallels, perhaps the text that comes closest in theme to AMC is De Iohanne Abbate from The Cambridge Songs, the final strophe of which claims,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Castigatus angustia} \\
\text{de levitate nimia} \\
\text{cum Angelus non potuit} \\
\text{vir bonus esse didicit.}\end{align*}\]

Abbot John, a symbol of the Christian monastic ideal, is here criticized for his presumption in adopting asceticism to achieve perfection. He should have tried instead to be a moral man before endeavouring to become a hermetic saint. Like AMC, De Iohanne Abbate appears to chastize those who would blindly espouse Christian dogma without acknowledging the nature of its traditions. The B-text of AMC, then, appears to fit within a context of intellectual introspection in its rejection of many ecumenical practices. Accepting or disregarding the author’s


message does not otherwise obviate our recognition of his talent; his (albeit occasionally inconsistent) treatment of sin and penance, and his outstanding wit, assure him a place as one of the most entertaining of medieval parodists.**

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