

**THE Ó LONGÁIN SCRIBAL FAMILY\***  
MEIDHBHÍN NÍ ÚRDAIL

Over four thousand Irish manuscripts are still in existence today and most of these were produced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When we consider the scribes who produced these handwritten books of Irish prose and poetry at that time, we know that the contribution of those based in Cork city and county features very prominently indeed, not least of course, because of the evidence provided by Professor Breandán Ó Conchúir in his pioneering study *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí 1700-1850* (1982). That important book discusses over two hundred scribes who flourished between 1700 and 1850, and those associated with Carraig na bhFear feature particularly strongly. In the words of Professor Ó Conchúir:

*Ba é an cúinne seo in oirdheisceart an chontae lárionad an léinn dúchais i gCorcaigh san 18ú haois, agus is fuirist a fheiscint ar an léarscáil gurbh é ceantar ba mhó saothrú anseo ná ceantar Charraig na bhFear agus an Teampaill Ghil. I bparóiste Charraig na bhFear féin bhí saothrú an léinn (agus na filíochta) ar siúl, gan stad nach mór, ó thosach na haoise anuas go dtí d'eireadh na haoise ar fad, agus faoi mar a chífimid ar ball, isteach go maith san 19ú haois ... .<sup>1</sup>*

At the heart of this aforementioned continuous cultivation of Irish literary scholarship in Carraig na bhFear must surely be the remarkable contribution by the Ó Longáin family of scribes, a contribution which spans almost two centuries of manuscript production. Given that over six hundred manuscripts were written entirely, or in part, by them, they are indeed unique for their dedication in producing handwritten books of Irish prose and poetry. The individual members are as follows: Mícheál son of Peadar (d. 1770) and his son, Mícheál Óg (1766-1837), the latter's three sons, twins Peadar (1801-c. 1860) and Pól (1801-66), and their younger brother Seosamh (1817-80), and finally Seosamh's son, Mícheál (b. 1856).<sup>2</sup>

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Mícheál son of Peadar Ó Longáin spent his formative years in Ballydonohoe (Baile Uí Dhonnchú) near Glin (An Gleann) in Co. Limerick. He was employed as land

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<sup>1</sup> Breandán Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí 1700-1850* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1982), 194-5.<sup>2</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 88-158; Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Motivations and Milieu* (Münster, 2000).<sup>3</sup> Royal Irish Academy MS 24 A 15, p. 58; NUI Galway MS G 70, p. 154; National Library of Ireland MS G 534, p. 409.

<sup>2</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 88-158; Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Motivations and Milieu* (Münster, 2000).<sup>3</sup> Royal Irish Academy MS 24 A 15, p. 58; NUI Galway MS G 70, p. 154; National Library of Ireland MS G 534, p. 409.

agent and rent receiver to Edmond Fitzgerald, who became Knight of Glin in 1737. On at least three occasions, this Ó Longáin scribe refers to himself as coming from *Gleann gan Ridire fo ríor*, ‘from Glin without a Knight alas’.<sup>3</sup> We can apply his description literally, of course, to the state of affairs which came about in 1740 when the Knight, Edmond, a Catholic, was ousted from the property in Glin in that year by his younger brother, Richard Fitzgerald, who had conformed to the Established Church.<sup>4</sup> We also know that Ó Longáin had two brothers. In a series of three poems composed by his son, Mícheál Óg, for example, we learn that one of his father’s brothers, Seán, had himself a son named Tomás who was commonly known as ‘Captain Steel’ in Glin because of his involvement in the agrarian secret society known as the Whiteboys. This same Tomás was transported to Botany Bay for his involvement in the Rebellion of 1798 and on returning to Ireland in 1817, lost an eye in a duel.<sup>5</sup> A second brother, Pádraig Rua, had a daughter named Siobhán who c. 1741 composed the following stanza ‘to a fine fishing boat’ (*do bhád breá iascaireachta*) which she owned named *An Bhearúinneach* and to its boatsman (*bádaeir*), a member of the McCarthy family:

*Slán gan chiach go dtrialla an Bhearúinneach,  
go láidir dian ag stialladh glas tonnathach,<sup>6</sup>  
lán go giall don iasc ag teacht chugainne  
ag an gCárthach bhfial aniar ó Dheasmhúinne.<sup>7</sup>*

May *An Bhearúinneach* journey safely without mist, ripping billowy currents strongly and swiftly, coming to us brimming with fish [steered] by generous McCarthy from the west from Desmond.

Mícheál Ó Longáin proved to be quite a migrant as is evident from manuscripts written by him in different parts of Co. Cork and South Kerry from 1740 until the early 1760s. We find him transcribing in 1740, for example, near Castlehaven in West Carbery, but he also spent some time in Dublin where he completed RIA MS 23 O 37, probably around 1752, for the renowned eighteenth-century doctor and manuscript collector, Dr. John Fergus (d. 1761).<sup>8</sup> As well as Dr Fergus, another of Ó Longáin’s more prominent scholarly patrons was Dr John O’Brien, Roman Catholic Bishop of Cloyne and Ross (1748-69), who is best known for his Irish-English dictionary

<sup>3</sup> Royal Irish Academy MS 24 A 15, p. 58; NUI Galway MS G 70, p. 154; National Library of Ireland MS G 534, p. 409.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas F. Culhane, ‘Traditions of Glin and its Neighbourhood’, *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society* 2 (1969), 74-101 (at p. 82); J. Anthony Gaughan, *The Knights of Glin: A Geraldine Family* (Dublin, 1978), 70; Thomas J. Byrne, ‘The Four Brothers: Eighteenth century Knights of Glin’, *Glencorby Chronicle* 1/2 (2001), 28-48 (at p. 28).<sup>5</sup> Rónán Ó Donnchadha (ed.), *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin, File* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1994), 95-9.<sup>6</sup> MS *tónnthach*

<sup>5</sup> Rónán Ó Donnchadha (ed.), *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin, File* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1994), 95-9.<sup>6</sup> MS *tónnthach*

<sup>6</sup> MS *tónnthach*

<sup>7</sup> RIA MS 23 G 24, p. 67. I have normalised the orthography in this and other excerpts quoted from the manuscripts, while accompanying translations, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

<sup>8</sup> According to his grandson, Seosamh, this manuscript ‘was transcribed probably about the year 1752’ (marginal note in RIA MS 67 E 6, p. 225, i.e. volume 1 of Eugene O’Curry’s handwritten catalogue (1843) of manuscripts in the Hodges and Smith Collection in the Royal Irish Academy). For John Fergus, see Diarmuid Ó Catháin, ‘John Fergus MD, Eighteenth-century Doctor, Book Collector and Irish Scholar’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries* 118 (1988), 139-62.

*Focalóir Gaoidhilge-Sax-Bhéarla or an Irish-English dictionary* (Paris, 1768).<sup>9</sup> Among the scribal texts provided by our scribe for Bishop O'Brien are genealogies relevant to the Bishop's ancestors, the O'Briens of Dál gCais in Thomond, which he compiled between 1760 and 1762. It is not unlikely, therefore, that he was included among those scholars referred to by Dr O'Brien in the preface to his dictionary as 'persons of the best skill in the Irish language, with whom [he] kept a correspondence of Letters for that purpose for several years'.<sup>10</sup>

Our scribe returned at least once to his native Limerick in the early 1750s as he is mentioned as the complainant in a warrant (*barántas*) by the poet Aindrias Mac Craith, *alias* 'An Mangaire Súcach' (c. 1707/8-c. 1794), against Seán Ó Tuama *an Ghrinn* ('of the Merriment', d. 1775), which seems to have been composed in January 1753 and which begins as follows:

*Whereas d'áitigh araoir dom láthair  
saoirfhear sairghlic sítheoilte,  
aon den dáimh ba chaoine cáil,  
is groífhear grámhar gaoisghleoite,  
gur shín ina dháil le tíocht thar Máigh ...*<sup>11</sup>

Whereas last night in my presence a noble man, most wise and refined, gave evidence, one of the assembly of gentlest repute, and a man, sturdy, affectionate, in wisdom delightful, who added to his company in crossing the Maigue ...

Mac Craith's poem implies that Ó Longáin remained in regular contact with the local Maigue poets (*filí na Máighe*). This comes as no surprise, of course, given that he too was a poet — seven poems have come down to us which we may attribute with certainty to him.

A colophon in the aforementioned RIA MS 23 O 37 suggests Mícheál Ó Longáin's awareness of, and maybe even his slight impatience with, the itinerant nature of his life: he informs the reader on page 95 that his work was written *le seachráin siaraí ó Ghleann an Ridire i gContae Luimne san Múmha[i]n* — 'with everlasting wandering from Glin in Co. Limerick in Munster'. He eventually settled down in Carraig na bhFear towards the end of his life, however, in Béal Átha Maghair, between Ballynaglogh (Baile na gCloch) and Ballybrack (An Baile Breac). It was here that his son Mícheál Óg was born on 1 August 1766; and it was here too that he himself died four years later. Why this particular choice of location in which to settle, we do not know, but he may have been swayed in his decision by the fact that Daniel McCarty (Domhnall Spáinneach), brother of Charles (Cormac Spáinneach) and owner of the castle of Carraig na bhFear, was married to Grace Fitzgerald, who, it is claimed,

<sup>9</sup> On this Irish scholar, see James Coombes, *A Bishop of Penal Times. The Life and Times of John O'Brien Bishop of Cloyne and Ross 1701–1769* (Cork, 1981); Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 218–22; Diarmaid Ó Catháin, 'An Irish Scholar Abroad: Bishop John O'Brien of Cloyne and the Macpherson Controversy', in Patrick O'Flanagan, Cornelius G. Buttner (eds), *Cork: History and Society* (Dublin, 1993), 499–533; Proinsias Mac Cana, *Collège des Irlandais Paris and Irish Studies* (Dublin, 2001), 97–113.

<sup>10</sup> O'Brien, *Focalóir Gaoidhilge-Sax-Bhéarla*, xli.

<sup>11</sup> Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, *An Barántas* (Má Nuad, 1978), 136–8 (at p. 137).

belonged to the Fitzgeralds of Glin. Charles died without issue in 1761 and Daniel's son, also Daniel, succeeded in Carraig na bhFear.<sup>12</sup>

In effect, then, we may regard Carraig na bhFear as a home from home for Mícheál son of Peadar Ó Longáin. He was buried in the McCarty burying place, Whitechurch, a fact that he himself anticipated in the following stanza which was remembered in Glin down to recent times:

*Ón nGleann i bhfad má thagann mo chomhgas gaoil,  
ba mhéinn leo stad 's an leac so ' thógaint díom;  
gheobhaidh siad me gan phreab i gcomhrainn chaoil  
san dTeampall Geal le hais an róid im luí.*<sup>13</sup>

If my relatives come from Glin far off, they might wish to stop and remove this gravestone from me; they will find me lifeless in a narrow coffin in Whitechurch lying next to the road.

Mícheál Óg inserted the following obituary note in honour of his father:

*Beannacht Dé, na Naomh agus na n-aingeal le hanam an deighfhir ghrámhair  
Ghaelaigh ghasta ghlainmhéinigh do scríbh an seinleabhar so .i. Mícheál mac  
Peadair Uí Longáin ó Ghleann an Rid[i]re i gContae Luimne; agus atá curtha  
anois san Teampall Gheal na Móna Móire idir Chorcaigh agus Mhala.  
Timcheall na bliana 1770 is ea d'éag sé. Dia len anam adeirim, agus le ár n-  
anmna uile. Go bhfeiceam go léir a chéile i bhFlaithiúnas. Amen. 1817, i  
gCorcaigh.*<sup>14</sup>

The blessing of God, the Saints and angels on the soul of the loving, Irish, clever, upright fine man who wrote this old book i.e. Michael son of Peter Long<sup>15</sup> from Glin in County Limerick; and who is now buried in Whitechurch of Móin Mhór between Cork and Mallow. He died about the year 1770. God rest his soul I say, and all our souls. May we all see each other in Paradise. Amen. 1817, in Cork.

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To the second generation of Ó Longáin scribes now, and to Mícheál Óg whom I regard as the most famous member of this scribal family. Notwithstanding the breadth of literary texts transmitted by this native man of letters in his vast corpus of

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Ireland* (London, 1912), 433; Samuel Trant McCarthy, *The MacCarthy's of Munster. The Story of a Great Irish Sept* (Dundalk, 1922), 223; cf. T[adhg] Ó M[urchadha], 'Mícheál Ó Longáin', *Faiche na bhFíli Carraig na bhFear: Cuimhneachán — Souvenir* ([Carraig na bhFear], 1962), 49-52 (at p. 50).

<sup>13</sup> Pádraig de Brún, 'The Glin Family and Irish Poetry', in Tom Donovan (ed.), *The Knights of Glin: Seven Centuries of Change* (Glin, 2009), 274-301 (at p. 282).

<sup>14</sup> RIA MS 23 N 12, p. 208; a similar note occurs on p. 198 of the manuscript. *Móin Mhór* above appears to be located near Glanmire (Edmund Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum Locorum et Tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae*, s.n. *Móin Mór*).

<sup>15</sup> As well as this translation of the surname into English, the alternative translations (O')Longan and (O')Langan also occur in the Ó Longáin manuscripts.

manuscripts, we are indeed very fortunate that he provides us with copious notes about himself along with fascinating *vignettes* about family and friends, explanatory glosses, colophons and jottings, as well as correspondence with contemporary Irish scribes and scholars. Taking all of this together, we have a valuable record of events in Mícheál Óg's time and insights into his life almost on a day-to-day basis. As well as being one of the most prolific scribes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland, he was also a competent poet. Over 350 of his poems have survived in the manuscripts, 41 of which were published some ten years ago,<sup>16</sup> while a complete anthology of his poetry is currently being edited by Professor Breandán Ó Conchúir.

We may begin here by paraphrasing an intriguing autobiographical note written by Mícheál Óg in 1791 when he was about twenty-four years of age.<sup>17</sup> He tells us that he was born on 1 August 1766 at Béal Átha Maghair in the parish of Dunbulloge (Dún Bolg), that he was orphaned at the age of eight-and-a-half and that as a result he lived for two years in the parish of Caheragh (Cathrach) in the barony of Carbery West having been sent for by Fr Domhnall Ó Cearbhaill. On his return, Mícheál Óg writes that he went to school (*chuas ar scoil*), but interestingly, he goes on to say that he is not proud of the fact that he had to interrupt this period of schooling to turn his hand to cow herding and delivering milk in churns: no forebear of his had ever engaged in such menial activity. By eighteen, he tells us that he was back at school again studying arithmetic and learning Latin during the next year.

While this autobiographical account is striking for the personal light it throws on the man himself, I suggest that it also sets out what would eventually emerge as Mícheál Óg's ambition to produce manuscripts and, indeed, his aim to see his scribal craft through to the next Ó Longáin generation. We get a sense of the importance of learning *per se* as well as a sense of his awareness that this was a course that he, as an Ó Longáin, was obliged to follow. It is a stance which comes through time and again in his colophons and notes addressed to his 'dear reader' (*léitheoir ionmhain*). Yet it is significant, I think, that this note is not addressed to any particular 'dear reader', but rather that it smacks of an entry in a personal diary, whereby the writer is taking stock of life thus far while preparing also for a new stage devoted to scholarship and learning. This brings me to an important function of manuscript compilation and transmission for Mícheál Óg: several texts and manuscripts he says he wrote 'for my own use' (*chum mh'úsáide féin*), a statement of intent which occurs frequently in his colophons — we find it from the very beginning in the earliest manuscript which he began writing (Maynooth MS M 57, part a) at the age of nineteen or twenty, for example — and we also find the variant expression by him that he is writing *chum m'úsáide féin agus cháich* ('for my own use and that of everybody'). Linked with this is a sense of his active role in retrieving Irish sources from the darkness and oblivion of the past. By way of illustration, we may note the following passage from an introduction to *An Coileach Feá* ('The Woodcock'), an anthology of prose and poetry compiled by Mícheál Óg in 1816:

*A léitheoir dhil ionmhain ag so An Coileach Feá .i. leabhar iona bhfuilid suim mhaith tuarascbhála ar chogaí agus ar choinbhliochtaibh na nGael féin le chéile iarna gcur san gcairt mbig si anois ar fhorálamh Éamainn Haicéad a gCorca noch do dhiol go maith as a scríobh agus sin ar mhaithe leis an*

<sup>16</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*.

<sup>17</sup> T[adhg] Ó M[urchadha], 'Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin (1766-1837)', *Faiche na bhFilí Carraig na bhFear: Cuimhneachán — Souvenir* ([Carraig na bhFear], 1962), 53-8 (at p. 54); Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 101; Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 43-4.

*nGaoidheilg agus d'fhonn cúnamh fuascalta do thabhairt uirthi ón ndorchadas ndearmadach ndanardha ionna bhfuil le cian d'aimsir, ní nár aomhsad daoine eile acht a' ceisneamh agus a' gearán ar olcas na haimsire agus ar theirce an airgid.*<sup>18</sup>

Dear beloved reader here is The Woodcock i.e. a book in which there is a good number of descriptions of the battles and conflicts of the Irish themselves with one another having been put in this small manuscript now at the command of Edmond Hackett in Cork who paid well for its writing and [who did] that for the good of the Irish language and in order to help revive it from the defective foreign darkness in which it has been for a long time, something which other people did not consent to but rather [were] grumbling and complaining about the terribleness of the times and the lack of money.

Implicit in the notion of revival from darkness and oblivion, of course, is an awareness that the transcription of texts would ensure their conservation for a wider readership in the future. Accordingly, Mícheál Óg intended his scribal craft to be instrumental 'in keeping the language alive' (*chum na teangan do choimeád ar bun*) in that it enabled him to provide transcripts of sources formerly 'buried in obscurity', which would be 'sufficient to compile or ma[ke a] pretty library of our native tongue'.<sup>19</sup>

Some further biographical details now concerning Mícheál Óg the man: down to the year 1796, we find him moving around Carraig na bhFear transcribing manuscript material in private houses; but by 1797 he is beginning to move further afield to places like Kerryville, Cork city and Macroom. Early in the year 1795, he contemplated emigrating to America:

*Atá deifir mhór orm mé bheith ag dul don Talamh Nua .i. go hAmeiriocá i gcionn deich lá ó inniu agus ba mhian liom ní éigin de theanga mo thire féin a bheith agam, óir ní fheadar an dtiocfaínn thar n-ais go bráth.*<sup>20</sup>

I am in great haste as I am going to the New Land i.e. to America ten days from today and I would wish to have with me something of the language of my own country, for I do not know whether I will ever return.

While he later offers no explanation as to why he remained in Ireland, his decision to do so may have been influenced by the fact that he had fallen in love with a local woman. Writing in Killydonoghoe in the summer of 1795, for example, he concluded his work with the following admission:

*Gonab é sin Comhrac Firdia agus Chúchuluinn go n-uige sin. Iar na ghraphadh liomsa Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin chuim mh'úasáide féin a gCéill Uí Dhonncha i bparóiste Ghleanna Maghair i dtigh Thomáis Uí Chíosáin, an t-ochtú lá déag don mhí August san mbliain d'aois ár dTighearna Íosa Críost*

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<sup>18</sup> Manchester MS 76, p. iii.

<sup>19</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 98-9.

<sup>20</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí*, 103; Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 47.

.1795. Agus san .29. blian damh aois féin. Do bhíos i ngrá le Máire Ní Chíosáin  
an tan sin. Dia linn.<sup>21</sup>

So that that is *Comhrac Fir Dia agus Chúchulainn* thus far. Having been written by me Mícheál Óg Long for my own use in Killydonoghoe in the parish of Glanmire in the house of Thomas Cashman, the eighteenth day of the month of August in the year of our Lord Jesus Christ 1795. And in the twenty-ninth year of my own age. I was in love with Mary Cashman that time. God be with us.

In the original source, the words underlined above are encrypted in the form of a cipher thereby indicating that Mícheál Óg may have used it either as a means of keeping his communication secret or as a way of conveying special meaning in an otherwise straightforward colophon.

Some weeks before this, on 20 July 1795, our scribe referred to the same cipher as ‘oghaim órtha’, i.e. *ogham órdha* or ‘golden ogham’, and outlined by means of an example (*sómpla*) five vowels, five diphthongs / digraphs (*ao, ia, ua, ea, oi*), a nasal (*ng*) and lenition. This he followed with a number of quatrains in the script and concluded in the accompanying colophon, also in *ogham órdha*, that its purpose was ‘for my own use and that of the Irish soldiers (*chuim m’úsáide féin agus na n-óglach nGaolach*).’<sup>22</sup> The context of his statement is significant given the overall conspiratorial expansion in Cork and its hinterland at this time. Catholics, seeing no hope of emancipation from the Irish government in the wake of the failed Fitzwilliam lord lieutenantcy in 1795, were looking to the secret society of the United Irishmen to promote the Catholic cause. A United Irish club had already been formed in Cork in the summer of 1793 and by 1797 the movement was well established in the city.<sup>23</sup> Taking the above colophon in light of such regenerated radical activity, therefore, Mícheál Óg must have understood the necessity to encode messages in ciphertext and, as I have argued elsewhere, the manuscript evidence strongly suggests that he, in fact, was the original creator of *ogham órdha*.<sup>24</sup>

Doubtless the necessity for encryption would soon present itself as a likely option for our scribe. He joined the United Irishmen in Cork city in 1797 and continued to work as an active United Irish organiser over the next two years at least. As the only major Irish-language poet known to have been involved in the movement, he composed a number of poems promoting the United Irish cause while at the same time condemning the fate of its prominent leaders Arthur O’Connor (1763-1852) and Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763-98).<sup>25</sup> One of these poems, he notably informs us, is to be sung to the ‘air of Rights of Man’ (*fonn Córa Duine*) while another of his

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<sup>21</sup> RIA MS 23 G 21, p. 430; cf. Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 283 n. 684, and Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 55 n. 38.

<sup>22</sup> RIA MS 23 N 20, pp 5-6.

<sup>23</sup> David Dickson, *Old World Colony. Cork and South Munster 1630-1830* (Cork, 2005), 456-67; Seán Ó Coindealbháin, ‘The United Irishmen in Cork County’, *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 53 (1948), 115-29 (at pp 117-22).

<sup>24</sup> Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, ‘Ogham Órdha in den späteren irisch-gälischen Handschriften’, in Stefan Zimmer, Rolf Ködderitzsch, Arndt Wigger (eds), *Akten des zweiten deutschen Keltologen-Symposiums* (Tübingen, 1999), 149-62.

<sup>25</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 70-5, 77-94, 100-4; see also Breandán Ó Buachalla, ‘From Jacobite to Jacobin’, in Thomas Bartlett et al. (eds), *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective* (Dublin, 2003), 75-96 (at pp 85-96).

manuscripts includes instructions, in English, for sword exercises.<sup>26</sup> Such was his success in recruiting members for the United Irishmen in Carraig na bhFear and throughout Cork county, moreover, that his name occurs during the trial of a fellow member (Simon Donovan) in June 1799, his effectiveness as a courier throughout Munster finding particular mention during the court proceedings. The threat this posed to his life caused him to go into hiding (*gurbh éigean dom teitheadh*), but Mícheál Óg believed that ‘it was God’s will that Simon was set free and that the boors did not catch me’ (*Ba é toil Dé gur saoradh Síomonn agus nach rugadar na búir ormsa*).<sup>27</sup> Recalling his duties as an effective courier at that time undoubtedly brings to mind the poem for which he is probably best known, namely that which was his personal missive to the Munstermen, requesting that they follow the brave example of those in Wexford who fought in the battle of Vinegar Hill. It begins thus:

*Beir litir uainn don Mhumhain leat  
a riúin dhil ’s a stóir,  
is aithris-se tré riún dóibh  
go bhfuil an cúrsa ’na gcomhair;  
inis gur mó ainnir mhilis mhúinte  
agus leanbh fireann fionn leis,  
is fear breá cliste cumtha  
do fúigeadh ar feo.*<sup>28</sup>

Bring with you a letter from me to Munster o darling and dear one, and do tell them in secret that the course is ready for them; tell that many a sweet, pleasant maiden and [many] a male fair child, and [many] a fine clever handsome man has been left dead.

Besides his role as scribe and poet, Mícheál Óg, like many of his scribal confrères in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was also a teacher. (We must remember, of course, that institutional schooling was not introduced into Ireland until 1831 and that schooling before then was generally left to private initiative, with or without the support of churches.) In 1799, and at the age of about thirty-two, he tells us that he had a school in Ballynaglogh, Carraig na bhFear.<sup>29</sup> Teaching was to remain a part of his life throughout as borne out by other colophons: he mentions, for example, teaching in the parish of Dunbulloge, and in the townlands of Lyre (An Ladhar) and Ballynaborthagh (Baile na bPórtach). In 1809 we find him teaching further afield in Caherdinny (Cathair Dhroinge) in northeast Cork and by 1814 he styled himself an *oide scoile*, or ‘school teacher’, in Glanmire Church.<sup>30</sup> Mícheál Óg, of course, was first and foremost a teacher to his own family and this may explain references in his colophons to manuscript material being completed ‘for the use of his own family and that of everybody’ (*chuim úsáide a chloinne féin agus cháich*). Official documentation of his role as teacher has also served in the form of a report published from an abstract of returns by the Roman Catholic clergy for the year 1824, which lists a school (‘mud cabin’) run by ‘Michael Long’ in the townland of ‘West Coole’ in

<sup>26</sup> RIA MS 23 G 21, p. 510; RIA MS 23 N 14, p. 340 and continued on p. 313, headed ‘Table of the Five Guards’.

<sup>27</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 105; Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 50-1.

<sup>28</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 90.

<sup>29</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 105; Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 50.

<sup>30</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 66 n. 84, n. 85.

the civil parish of Templeusque (Teampall Loiscthe) with 28 males and 12 females in attendance.<sup>31</sup> In May 1826, moreover, he had completed teaching (one quarter) in the Bandon district for the Irish Society of Bible Teachers, i.e. the ‘Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of their Own Language’, for which he received a gratuity of £1 3s 1d.<sup>32</sup>

Reference to formal schooling for his sons features as well in Mícheál Óg’s manuscripts. In August 1816, for example, he addressed a stanza beginning *A Eoghain dhil ghasta ’sa dhalta na Múises mbán* (‘O dear, clever Eoghan and pupil of the beloved Muses’) to Eoghan Ó Súilleabháin, a teacher in Cork city, with the intention of sending Pól to school there. In 1818 he composed three stanzas beginning *Gluais ort, a bhuachuill bhig aoraigh óig* (‘Move along, o little happy young boy’), the boy in question being his son Pádraig who was to attend a school in Inishannon near Bandon run by Seán Ó Deasúna, while two years later he notes that Peadar was also ‘at school’ in Inishannon. In April 1833, his stanza beginning *A Uí Dhúinaí shéimh is léannta ’s is fiormhaith cáil* (‘O gentle Downey, learned and of excellent reputation’) seems to be recommending a boy — possibly his son Seosamh — as pupil.<sup>33</sup> Seosamh was still at school three years later when Mícheál Óg writes that his youngest son ‘entered upon his 1st quarter with Mr. Murray on the 30th of June 1836. Murray’s terms for teaching English Grammar & Book Keeping 8s. 6 per quarter. God bless us all. M. Longan’.<sup>34</sup>

The early decades of the nineteenth century were particularly difficult for Mícheál Óg. He had married Mary Lyons (probably in 1800) and the couple had eight children to provide for: twins Peadar and Pól, Pádraig (b. 1805), Neans / Nancy (b. 1809), Nóra (b. 1812), Seán / John (b. 1815 / 16) and Seosamh.<sup>35</sup> An eighth child, Mary Crowley, from his wife’s first marriage, was accidentally killed at Pope’s Quay in 1821. Mícheál Óg recorded this tragic death thus in an accompanying heading to his elegy in English, ‘sung by her own stepfather April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1821. Easter Sunday’:

On the Death of Mary Crowley who departed this life on the 2d day of April 1821 — Being accidentally kill’d by a Plank that fell down off of the Quay, as she was taking Water at the Ship on Pope’s Quay Corke — An unlucky accident indeed!<sup>36</sup>

Following the birth of Peadar and Pól in 1801, Mícheál Óg moved to Limerick to live with his relatives there, and hence his manuscripts locate him in West Limerick and North Kerry between 1802 and 1807. When in North Kerry in June 1802, he set down twelve personal rules of prayer, fasting and penance, which he concluded thus:

<sup>31</sup> *Second Report from the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry* (Dublin, 1826), Appendix 22, 910-11. The townland of Coole West is today in the civil parish of Rathcooney, Co. Cork.

<sup>32</sup> Pádraig de Brún, *Scriptural Instruction in the Vernacular. The Irish Society and its Teachers 1818-1827* (Dublin, 2009), 87, 319.

<sup>33</sup> RIA MS 23 N 32, p. 66; RIA MS 23 C 19, p. 32; National Library of Ireland MS G 306, p. 125; de Brún, *Scriptural Instruction in the Vernacular*, 218-19.

<sup>34</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 298 n. 51; Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 119.

<sup>35</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 295 n. 984; Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 70 n. 100, 119 n. 2.

<sup>36</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 78-9 n. 140. The high occurrence of drownings as a result of unprotected quays and open docks in Cork city finds regular reporting in the Cork press from the second half of the eighteenth century; see Colman O’Mahony, *In the Shadows. Life in Cork 1750-1930* (Cork, 1997), 34-7.

*Cuirim druim le dul go hlfreann agus re peaca marbh do dhéanamh rem thoil go bráith ná choíche — oh! gráin ar an bpeaca marbh — éirghí moch timcheall éirghe gréine an leathbhliain fhada .i. ráithe an tSamhraidh agus ráithe an Fhómhair 'sé sin ó Bhealtaine go Samhain, agus éirghe roimh éirghe gréine an leathbhliain ghearra .i. ó Shamhain go Bealtaine — mo cheann do chioradh agus mo lámha agus m'aghaidh do ní agus gan bheith díomhaoin — acht bheith a' léitheoireacht a' scríbhneoireacht ag obair nó ag úrnaíocht.*

I turn my back on Hell and the committing of a mortal sin willingly forever or always — oh! shame on mortal sin — to rise early approximately at sunrise during the long half year i.e. during the three months of Summer and the three months of Autumn that is from May to November, and to rise before sunrise during the short half year i.e. from November to May — to comb my hair and to wash my face and my hands and not to be idle — but to continue reading, writing, working or praying.<sup>37</sup>

By 1807 the family had returned to Cork, settling first in 'Kerrypike near the Lee' (*Cúil Uí Mhurchú cois Laoi*) and then once again in Carraig na bhFear. Mícheál Óg continued his profession as itinerant teacher and scribe, but we find that once the family settled in Dublin Hill (*Cnoc Átha Cliath*) in 1815, Irish-language scholars in Cork city and beyond are gradually becoming part of his circle. One prominent example is his friendship with fellow parishioner Donnchadh Ó Floinn (d. 1830) who was based in Shandon Street where he had a grocer's shop.<sup>38</sup> The next five years marked the beginning of the most prolific stage of Mícheál Óg's output as a scribe. Ó Floinn, of course, had borrowed the 'Book of Lismore' in 1815 and while in his possession in Cork for over a year this fifteenth-century vellum manuscript was the most important source for scribes based in the city, particularly for Mícheál Óg and his twin sons. This was also a time of substantial commissioned work, two of his most important patrons being Dr John Murphy, Roman Catholic Bishop of Cork (1815-47), and Henry Joseph Heard, Church of Ireland Dean of Cork and Ross (d. 1833). Patronage by the latter, of course, reflects an overall changing attitude to Irish by Protestants in Ireland for whom literary sources in the language were becoming an object of increasing antiquarian interest by the early decades of the nineteenth century. Not only was Mícheál Óg mindful of this cultural shift, but he acknowledged its potential for restoring and preserving the Irish language as the following extract from an essay of his in 1818 shows:

It is in the power of the Protestant and Catholic pastors of every denomination generally to do much in restoring and preserving the Irish language. They are enlightened and good men, and may this promote wholesome doctrines, and valuable knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

Other significant patrons and scholarly contacts down to 1820 include the prominent Cork banker James Roche (1770-1853) and Fr Pól Ó Briain, first Professor of Irish at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth (1804-20). This period in Cork city, then, was a good one for Mícheál Óg's scribal craft (and indeed for that of his sons also). He became a significant contributor to the network of scribes who flourished in the first decades of

<sup>37</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 58.

<sup>38</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 69-77.

<sup>39</sup> National Library of Ireland MS G 96, pp 187-94 (at p. 192); cf. Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 98.

the nineteenth century, as documented in Breandán Ó Conchúir's aforementioned *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*. The context of his work changed significantly, too, from the more local-based one involving transcription in his own house, or in the homes of friends and fellow scribes, to one which became more patron-centred. Given that many of these patrons were English-speaking, original material in Irish is increasingly accompanied in his manuscripts by English translations.

The period from 1820 to his death in 1837 sees Mícheál Óg negotiating further difficulties, including even the prospect of abject poverty due to a sharp decline in patronage. This period also yielded the fine poem, his finest I believe, *Fuacht na scailpe-se* (1823), which lays bare the man's personal state of desperation while also offering an illuminating insight into the more general state of affairs for the Irish at that time:

*Fuacht na scailpe-se, deatach is gaoth gheimhridh,  
cruas na leapa so 's easpa brait lae is oíche,  
muarchuid teacsanna, deachuithe is glaoch cíosa,  
tug buartha cathach me, is easbathach éagcaointeach.*

*Mo scuaine leanbh go dealbh gan aon ní acu,  
's an tsuaircbhean chneasta, a mbanaltra bhéilbhinn sin,  
cruas na reachta so ag Gallaibh dár ngéirdhíbirt,  
do bhuair, do mheathlaigh, do mhairbh go léir mh'intinn.<sup>40</sup>*

The coldness of this hovel, smoke and the winter's wind, the hardness of this bed and the lack of cover day and night, numerous taxes, tithes and demands for rent, have made me troubled, sorrowful, needy, mournful.

My clutch of children [are] poor and have nothing, and the kind, civil woman, their sweetlipped nurse, the harshness of this law of Foreigners fiercely persecuting us, has tormented, weakened and deadened my mind entirely.

Failing sight was by now becoming a problem as he makes clear in the following complaint addressed to his friend, Donnchadh Ó Floinn:

*Le léithe mo chéibhe is le daille mo dhearc,  
is féidir a léirmheas go bhfuilim ag meath;  
ní léitear liom véarsa ná siolla 'na cheart,  
's is méala don Ghaeilge mar scoireas le seal.<sup>41</sup>*

With the greying of my hair and the blindness of my eyes, it can be understood that I'm waning; neither verse nor syllable is adjudged by me correctly, and great is the loss to the Irish language that I have ceased for some time.

A pair of glasses from Ó Floinn, accompanied by a stanza, in 1824 moves Mícheál Óg to compose a grateful response to his friend for the gift, beginning *Do fhuaras seoid*

<sup>40</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 128.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas F. O'Rahilly, *Búrdúin Bheaga. Pithy Irish Quatrains* (Dublin, 1925), 37, no. 178; Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, 'Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin 1766-1837', in Pádraig Ó Fiannachta (ed.), *Léas Eile ar ár Litríocht* (Má Nuad, 1982), 217-228 (at p. 227); Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 123.

*dheas ghleoiite ghreanta ghreidhneach* ('I received a lovely, fine, beautiful, bright jewel').<sup>42</sup>

By 1831 Mícheál Óg set about selling off some of his manuscripts to prospective buyers, as, for example, to Archdeacon Thomas O'Keefe (d. 1847), PP of Glanmire, 1828-9; and he has further material to offer buyers such as Fr Matthew Horgan (d. 1849), PP of Blarney and Whitechurch, 1817-1849, and an unnamed friend of Fr Michael Begley (d. 1856), curate in Carraig na bhFear, 1819-1838.<sup>43</sup> Brief commissioned work also comes his way from Bishop Murphy in 1833-4, although he declines the opportunity to produce scribal texts for Pilib Barún (Philip F. Barron, d. 1844), a prominent Irish scholar from Waterford, explaining his decision rather resignedly to fellow scribe, Uilliam Mac Coitir (fl. 1818-1835), as follows:

*Atáimse anois ar nós an tseannmhadra, ró-cheanúil ar mo chúinne féin, iar mbeith dham .IX. agus trí fichid an chéad lá de mhís Troghain na bliana so 1835. A bhuí re Dia.*<sup>44</sup>

I am now like the old dog, too fond of my own corner, having reached the age of sixty-nine on the first day of August of this year 1835. Thanks be to God.

Mícheál Óg died two years later on 17 May 1837; the following obituary notice was published during the same month:

On the 17th inst. at Cnocbuidhe, in the North Liberties of this city, Michael Oge O'Longain, aged 72 [*recte* 70] years. From the early age of 18 he devoted himself in a particular manner to the study and culture of his Native Language. He composed several pieces and transcribed nearly 300 volumes of Irish MSS. thus rescuing from destruction several rare and curious specimens of the ancient literature of Ireland. During the troubles of 1798, he had some providential escapes from falling a victim to that persecution and unjust suspicion which pursued every ardent lover of his country, and from which his quietness and simplicity of character could not altogether protect him. A few hours before his death, still calm and confiding in a future hope, he breathed into the ear of an affectionate son, a short and expressive Irish stanza, which he wished to have inscribed on his tomb, showing that even at the last hour the strong and ruling passion of his life — the perpetuation of the language 'of his own loved island of sorrow', was not entirely forgotten.<sup>45</sup>

The 'short and expressive Irish stanza' in question seems to be the following:

*Le ciumhais na licese curtha tá séimhfhear suairc,  
do bhí múinte milis glan soineanta saor gan gruaim,  
lér dhubhach gach tuairim dá dtigeadh ar Éirinn uair,*

<sup>42</sup> RIA MS 23 N 32, pp 2-3; Ó Fiannachta, 'Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin', 227.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.corkandross.org/priestsHistorical.jsp> (consulted May 2014); for Fr Matthew Horgan, see Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 83-4; J.P. McCarthy, 'Journeying to a Journal: the Society's Predecessors', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 96 (1991), 1-18 (at pp 8-10).

<sup>44</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 132; Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 90. For Mac Coitir and his manuscripts, see Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 23-4 and Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, 'Lámhscríbhinn Bhreise', *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* (1993), 236-42

<sup>45</sup> Séamus Ua Casaide, 'Three Irish Scribes of County Cork', *The Irish Booklover* 16 (1928), 4-5 (at p. 4).

*is guidhidh uile a dhul linn san Naomhbhrogh suas.*<sup>46</sup>

At the edge of this gravestone a gentle, pleasant man is buried, who was learned, graceful, sincere, serene, noble, loving, who was grieved at every [poor] opinion about Ireland that has been held, and pray ye all that he will go with us upwards to the Holy mansion.

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We turn briefly now to the third generation of Ó Longáin scribes — to the twins Peadar and Pól, and to their younger brother Seosamh — all of whom found in their father a consummate mentor. Evidence of fatherly guidance emerges quite early, in fact, in a poem of seven stanzas composed by Mícheál Óg in 1811 and beginning *A leinbh atá i dtúis do shaoil* ('O child who are in the beginning of your life') which, according to the accompanying heading, he intended as 'good advice for the young person' (*comhairle mhaith don duine óg*).<sup>47</sup> Writing in July 1812 'for his own sons and particularly for Pól' (*dá mhaca féin agus go háirithe do Phól*), Mícheál Óg warned as follows:

*Bíonn an bás ag teacht id dháil mar fhaolchoin ort,  
's gach daoirbheart smáil dá ndéinir gáirfid éigneach ort;  
Rí na ngrás ag éisteacht tá 's ag féachain ort,  
Is cuimhnig lá na sé mbeagchlár, na cré, 's na gcloch!*<sup>48</sup>

Death comes at you like wolves, and every disgraceful bad deed that you commit will call a violent fate upon you; the King of mercy is listening and watching you, and remember the day of the six little boards [coffin], of the soil and of the stones!

And, speaking 'to his son Joe' (*dá mhac Joe*) in October 1832 he cautioned:

*An glór nach fuintear le gaois  
's nach gaire don chroí ná don chab  
níl acht imtheacht le gaoith,  
mar imíonn ón ngadhar mbeag sceamh.*<sup>49</sup>

Talk that is not tempered by wisdom and is not closer to the heart than to the mouth remains unheeded, as a yelp coming from the little dog.

Like their father before them, all three brothers worked as teachers. According to a report published from an abstract of returns by the Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy for the year 1824, for example, 'Peter & Paul Long' ran a school ('stone wall,

<sup>46</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 298 n. 55.

<sup>47</sup> RIA MS 23 C 19, pp 329-30.

<sup>48</sup> O'Rahilly, *Búrdúin Bheaga*, 23, no. 112; cf. Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 146; Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 109.

<sup>49</sup> RIA MS 23 C 19, p. 330, a variant rendering of the sixth stanza of the poem referred to at n. 47 above.

thatched') in the townland of Carrignavar in the parish of Dunbulloge, which was attended by 78 males and 42 females (according to the Protestant clergy) and 45 males and 25 females (according to the Roman Catholic clergy).<sup>50</sup> Files in the National Archives of Ireland name 'Joseph Long' as appointee to the newly-created national school in Whitechurch in February 1849.<sup>51</sup> Teaching, however, was clearly not a passion for the youngest of Mícheál Óg's sons: by 1861 he was requesting the Cork antiquarian scholar John Windele (1801-65) to use his influence with members of Cork city corporation in ensuring that he be given a recently-vacated job as toll collector at the toll gate in Fair Lane (now Wolfe Tone Street),<sup>52</sup> which would rid him 'of the drudgery of teaching and the vexatious inspection of inspectors'.<sup>53</sup> While Pól continued to teach 'in Knocknahorgan or Poulacurry church' in 1829, Peadar and his younger brother Pádraig 'were working at that time for James Hanly'.<sup>54</sup> The latter is doubtless the same 'J. Hanly, Esq.' referred to in Samuel Lewis's contemporary account of Glanmire village, who together with 'Mr Lyons' employed 'upwards of 200 persons ... in the Glanmire woollen factory, higher up the river'.<sup>55</sup> It seems that Peadar eventually took charge of the family holding in the townland of Knockboy as 'Peter Long' is named the principal occupier in *Griffith's Valuation* of Dunbulloge parish in 1853 when the property was valued at an annual fee of £2 10s.<sup>56</sup> Pól Ó Longáin resided, for some years at least, in Sallybrook (Áth na Sailí) but, as will emerge further down here, he moved to Dublin in the 1850s. 'Joseph Long' is listed as the principal occupier of a house and small garden valued at an annual fee of £1 in *Griffith's Valuation* of Whitechurch parish in 1852.<sup>57</sup> He had married Mary Hickey two years before this and the couple had eight children during their years in Whitechurch.<sup>58</sup> Like his brother Pól, Seosamh also moved to Dublin where he lived from the 1860s, in 24 North Summer Street (off the North Circular Road), until his death in 1880.<sup>59</sup> He is buried in Glasnevin cemetery, although no monument marks the grave itself.

Of Mícheál Óg's sons, only Peadar appears to have been a poet. The manuscript sources ascribe two poems to him, the first beginning *A leabhair-sí atá idir lámha le fada 'bhliantaibh* ('O book which I have in hand for many years'), is an apology of

<sup>50</sup> *Second Report from the Commissioners of Irish Education Inquiry* (Dublin, 1826), Appendix 22, 906-7.

<sup>51</sup> NAI National Schools, Co. Cork ED 2/8, folio 88.

<sup>52</sup> [www.corkpastandpresent.ie/genealogy/oldlanesandalleysofcork/](http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/genealogy/oldlanesandalleysofcork/) (consulted May 2014).

<sup>53</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí*, 156; Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 121.

<sup>54</sup> 'Do bhí Peadar agus Pádraig ag obair do S[h]éamas [Ó] hÁinle an tan sin agus Pól ag múine scoile a Séipéal Chnuic an Charragáin nó Phoill an Choire', colophon by Mícheál Óg, 9 July 1829 (RIA MS 23 C 19, p. 63).

<sup>55</sup> Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* I (London, 1837), 654.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation> (consulted June 2014).

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation> (consulted June 2014).

<sup>58</sup> The marriage of Joseph Long and Mary Hickey of the townland of 'Gurteenastuka' took place in Whitechurch parish on 4 May 1850, and was witnessed by Paul Long and Daniel Mahony. The baptismal records for the parish list the couple's children as follows: Mary (1851), Anne (1852), Joanna (1854), Michael (1856), Paul (1858), Joseph (1861), Bridget (1863; d. 1863) and Margaret (1865). I am grateful to John Mulcahy and to Fr William Bermingham PP for facilitating my viewing of the marriage and baptismal records in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Blarney, Co. Cork.<sup>59</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 123. According to the records for St. Mary's Pro Cathedral, Marlborough Street, Dublin, a daughter, Bridget, was baptised on 18 November, 1867 (National Library of Ireland positive microfilm 9154).

<sup>59</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 123. According to the records for St. Mary's Pro Cathedral, Marlborough Street, Dublin, a daughter, Bridget, was baptised on 18 November, 1867 (National Library of Ireland positive microfilm 9154).

two stanzas for the years' delay in providing his patron, Aindrias Ó Súilleabháin, with a commissioned manuscript.<sup>60</sup> In the second, a poem of nine stanzas beginning *A lucht iúil na Mumhan maordha* ('O knowledgeable people of noble Munster'), Ó Longáin echoes the contempt of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Irish scholars for the lesser classes who aped foreign settlers in Ireland and who lost respect for native learning. While his bitterness is palpable throughout, he is equally filled with a sense of regret that literary scholarship was not always adequately acknowledged and supported in his own day.<sup>61</sup>

The lot of this third Ó Longáin generation reflects the changing times confronting Irish scribes generally in the second half of the nineteenth century when Irish manuscript production was in its final phase. Although the Ó Longáin brothers continued to benefit from individual patrons, patronage of this kind began to give way to that given by institutions and learned societies. Pól and Seosamh, for example, were both employed as official scribes for the Royal Irish Academy, Pól taking up this post in 1854 in Dublin, where he carried on cataloguing the institution's Irish manuscripts until his death in 1866. Seosamh was appointed to the post of Scribe to the Academy in 1865. Among his duties, he produced facsimile transcripts of *Leabhar na hUidhre*, the *Leabhar Breac* and the Book of Leinster all of which were the basis of lithographic reproductions of these medieval books published by the Academy in the 1870s and 1880. On 21 March 1874, he addressed the following letter on behalf of his son to Robert Atkinson, Librarian of the Royal Irish Academy:

Sir,

I agree that my son Michael is to enter on employment at the Academy House in transcribing Irish etc. under direction of the Librarian at the rate of 15/- per week hours from 10 to 5½ with one for dinner in the middle of the day. The engagement to commence as soon as possible. I also undertake to give him all the instruction I can in transcribing and learning Irish. This engagement to be terminable by one month's notice on either side.

Yours respectfully,  
Joseph O'Longan.<sup>62</sup>

Ó Longáin's son began his employment as Academy scribe on 25 March 1874, and to the weekly salary of 15 shillings referred to above he received a premium of £25 from the Cunningham Fund in November 1875 in recognition of 'the laborious nature' of his work and 'the amount of time devoted to the work'.<sup>63</sup> Incidentally, he is also likely to be the *Mac Uí Longáin* whom Douglas Hyde included among the competent native speakers of Irish in Dublin who joined the Gaelic League on its formation in 1893.<sup>64</sup>

Seosamh Ó Longáin's facsimile transcripts which were lithographically reproduced by the Royal Irish Academy are a reminder of changing times for scribes in Ireland who, by the middle of the nineteenth century, were transcribing texts in Irish for their reproduction in print. Of further relevance to the Ó Longáin family is

<sup>60</sup> RIA MS 23 E 16, pp 401; cf. Ní Úrdail, *The Scribe*, 107.

<sup>61</sup> Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail, 'Ein irisches Schmähgedicht aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert', in Gisbert Hemprich (ed.), *Festgabe für Hildegard L.C. Tristram* (Berlin, 2009), 201-10.

<sup>62</sup> Royal Irish Academy, Rough Minutes Irish Studies Committee, vol. 1 (1836-84).

<sup>63</sup> Royal Irish Academy, Rough Minutes Irish Studies Committee, vol. 1 (1836-84); Council Minutes, vol. 17 (March 1873-November 1875), pp 407-8. For the Cunningham Fund, founded in memory of Timothy Cunningham (d. 1789) who left £1,000 to the Academy, see Tarlach Ó Raifeartaigh (ed.), *The Royal Irish Academy: a Bicentennial History 1785-1985* (Dublin, 1985), 16-18, 71-3, 89, 321.

<sup>64</sup> Dubhghlas de hÍde, *Mise agus an Connradh (go dtí 1905)* (Baile Átha Cliath, 1937), 33.

*Gáirdín an Anma*, an Irish translation of the Catholic prayerbook *Garden of the Soul* (which itself was originally published in 1740 by Dr Richard Challoner (1691-1781), Vicar Apostolic of the London District). Written by Pól Ó Longáin, ‘for the special use of the Catholics of Ireland’ (*chum úsáide speisialta Chaitillicidhe na hÉirionn*), his text of *Gáirdín an Anma* was lithographically reproduced in 1844 by ‘Tadhg Ó Ceallacháin’, i.e. Timothy (O’)Callaghan whose business was at 45 South Mall, Cork.<sup>65</sup> Ó Longáin’s term *clochghrafadóir* — a compound and mixed calque made up of *cloch* (‘stone’) and *grafadóir* (‘grubber’) — neatly captures the lithographer’s method of printing, as does his term *clochbhualadh* (‘stone-stamping’) for lithography. Coincidentally, perhaps, the original lithographic reproduction of Pól Ó Longáin’s text came into the possession of a subsequent Irish-language scholar with Carraig na bhFear associations who also had a special interest in the Ó Longáin family, namely Fr Tadhg Ó Murchú (1908-71), former curate of the parish.<sup>66</sup> It was at the behest of ‘An tAthair Tadhg’ (as he was more fondly known) that the *Faiche na bhFíli* monument was built in the village over half a century ago to honour scholars, including Mícheál Ó Longáin and his son, Mícheál Óg, who flourished in the parish from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries.

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In conclusion, then, Ireland’s manuscript tradition owes much to the exceptional contribution of the Ó Longáin scribes. They ensured that the production and dissemination of texts in manuscripts as well as a concomitant tradition of Gaelic script endured down to the final decades of the nineteenth century. Why Mícheál Óg continued his father’s tradition of learning and passed it on to his sons is perhaps best conveyed by the man himself who strove at, he says, *gríosú bhfine Gael fán nGaeilge d’fhoghlaim agus do choimeád ar bun agus ar buaintseasamh, amhail ba dleacht agus ba chuí dóibh do dhéanamh*<sup>67</sup> (‘encouraging the people of Ireland to learn Irish and to keep it alive and permanent, as would be due and proper for them to do’). Thus captured *ipsissimis verbis*, Irish-language scholarship is indeed much the richer for the contribution of the Ó Longáin family.

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<sup>65</sup> Isaac Slater, *Royal National Commercial Directory of Ireland* (London, 1870), 52, 74; R.E. Fulton, *The City of Cork Directory* (Liverpool, 1871), 19, 228, 247; Francis Guy, *County and City of Cork Directory for the Years 1875-1876* (Cork, 1875) 581, 628; cf. James Buckley, ‘Timothy O’Callaghan, a Cork Lithographer, who printed the Prayer Book in Irish written by Pól Ó Longáin’, *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 41 (1936), 54.

<sup>66</sup> Pádraig Tyers, *An tAthair Tadhg* (An Daingean, 2000). *Gáirdín an Anma* is today in the private possession of Pádraig Ó Riain, Emeritus Professor of Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork; I am very grateful to Professor Ó Riain for permission to reproduce the work’s frontispiece and title-page here.

<sup>67</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 106.