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*AN GHAELIGE DO CHOIMEÁD AR BUN AGUS AR BUAINTEASAMH:*  
THE EXCEPTIONAL CASE OF THE Ó LONGÁIN FAMILY OF SCRIBES

*Meidhbhín Ní Úrdail*

In considering Irish scribes who produced handwritten books of prose and poetry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we know that the contribution of those based in Cork city and county is particularly prominent, not least, of course, because of the evidence provided by Professor Breandán Ó Conchúir in his pioneering study of Irish literary scholarship in the post-classical period, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*. That important book discusses some two hundred scribes who flourished between 1700 and 1850, and of these native men of letters, the contribution by the Ó Longáin scribal family certainly prevails.<sup>1</sup> Their extraordinary dedication has yielded over six hundred extant manuscripts written entirely or in part by them. The scribes in question are as follows: Mícheál mac Peadair (d. 1770) and his son, Mícheál Óg (1766–1837), the latter’s three sons, twins Peadar<sup>2</sup> (1801–c.1860) and Pól (1801–1866), and their younger brother Seosamh (1817–1880), and finally Seosamh’s son, Mícheál (1856–1877). We have to do here, then, with four generations of Ó Longáin scribes who ensured that literature in the Irish language continued to be transmitted and disseminated by hand in written documents during the eighteenth century and well into the second half of the century thereafter. Even in the second half of the nineteenth century itself, when the tradition of Irish manuscript production was coming to an end, members of this family were still producing beautiful books in clear, neat hands.<sup>3</sup>

With regard to the contents of the Ó Longáin manuscripts, they are of great value in representing textual traditions that are otherwise unattested. For instance, thirteenth-century poems in *dán díreach*, or strict versification in syllabic metres of the classical, Early Modern era, have been preserved exclusively in the family’s scribal corpus; and, unique to them also are copies of a number of poems contained in one of the most important sources for bardic religious verse, the early seventeenth-century Tinnakill verse miscellany (*duanaire*).<sup>4</sup> A more specific case is that of a poem beginning *Ní fada ón Fhódla a táth a dtuaidheamhain* (‘Soon from the North shall Éire be united’) which was composed about 1592 by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird (c.1567–c.1620), one of the most prominent of the bardic poets of his generation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*.

<sup>2</sup> The variant *Peattair*, i.e. *Peadair*, is well attested in the Ó Longáin manuscripts and was the form still used in West Muskerry down to contemporary times; cf. Ó Cróinín, ‘A devotional poem by Seán Máistir Ó Conaill’, 62 n. 111.

<sup>3</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 88–158; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*.<sup>4</sup> Ní Úrdail, ‘Two poems attributed to Muireadhach Albanach Ó Dálaigh’, 23–4; O’Sullivan, ‘The Tinnakill Duanaire’, 224–5.

<sup>4</sup> Ní Úrdail, ‘Two poems attributed to Muireadhach Albanach Ó Dálaigh’, 23–4; O’Sullivan, ‘The Tinnakill Duanaire’, 224–5.

<sup>5</sup> Mac Cionnaith, *Díoghlum dána*, 370–3; Ó Macháin, ‘Poems by Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird’, 262. For a translation into English, see McKenna, ‘Poem to Aodh Ruadh Ó Domhnaill’.

Only three quatrains have been transmitted in the earliest extant source from the seventeenth century, whereas at least eleven nineteenth-century Ó Longáin copies preserve a twenty-seven quatrain text, thereby pointing to their significance for this poem's textual tradition and survival.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the only surviving copy of a poem addressed to Sir Diarmuid Ó Seachnasaigh (d. 1673), head of the well-known Gaelic Ó Seachnasaigh family of Gort, Co. Galway, and attributed to the seventeenth-century historian Dubhaltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh (d. 1671), is that penned in 1763 by Mícheál mac Peadair Uí Longáin in RIA MS 23 N 12.<sup>7</sup> Present, too, in the latter manuscript are the first twenty-three paragraphs of the fifth of the Irish Grammatical Tracts, and Ó Longáin's text was the exemplar for that in Maynooth MS M 49 (pp. 198–204) written by his son at some point between 1818 and 1820. Taken together, these represent an independent witness to the fifth grammatical tract that has gone unnoticed in any discussion of it until very recently.<sup>8</sup>

It is thanks to Mícheál Óg, in particular, that two of the ten or so poems ascribed to Piaras Feiritéar (c. 1600–c. 1652) of the Dingle Peninsula have survived. Not only are these poems highly innovative examples of their respective genres, namely courtly love verse (*dánta grádha*) and the lament (*caoineadh*), but they also point to Feiritéar's connections with both Gaelic and English Protestant communities in seventeenth-century Ireland.<sup>9</sup> In the case of *fianaigheacht* verse, closely connected with the tradition of the late twelfth- or thirteenth-century *Agallamh na Seanórach*, a significant quantity is to be found in the Ó Longáin manuscripts, while a manuscript now in Scotland, and compiled by Mícheál Óg between 1812 and 1837, is probably the single most important collection of such verse made in the modern period.<sup>10</sup>

Turning briefly to prose texts: eighteenth and nineteenth-century copies of medical material by Cork scribes ultimately derive from a text written in 1761 by Mícheál mac Peadair Uí Longáin in RIA MS 23 N 15, which itself is a direct transcript of an early fifteenth-century vellum original.<sup>11</sup> The earliest surviving scribal witness of the annalistic compilation *Chronicum Scotorum*, moreover, is Dubhaltach Mac Fhir Bhisigh's seventeenth-century copy, now TCD MS 1292, and once again a direct transcript (NLI MS G 431) by the same Ó Longáin scribe has come down to us, which in turn was the exemplar for further copies by his grandsons, Peadar and Pól, in the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Mícheál mac Peadair's transcript (RIA MS 23 G 26) of the historical saga *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* was, according to Mícheál Óg, made in 1760 from a manuscript written in 1721 by Aindrias Mac Cruitín (d. 1738), which itself was a copy of the original written by Seán Mac Craith in 1459.<sup>13</sup> Subsequent

<sup>6</sup> Ó Macháin "'A llebraib imdaib": cleachtadh agus pátrúnacht an léinn', 166–7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ceileabhradh do Chloinn Fhiachrach* (14 qq), edited and discussed by Ó Muraíle, *The celebrated antiquary*, 282–3, 293–5. On 6 May 1833, Mícheál Óg inserted a note into RIA MS 23 N 12 (p. 198) stating that it was seventy years since his father wrote the manuscript.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon Ó Riain, 'Observations on the citations in IGT V', 2. A leaf inserted into NLI MS G 489 contains the first three paragraphs of the same tract in the hand of Mícheál mac Peadair; cf. Ní Shéaghdha, *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts*, 103.

<sup>9</sup> Ní Mhathúna, 'In praise of two Margarets: two laudatory poems by Piaras Feiritéar'; eadem, 'Convention and innovation in the poetry of Piaras Feiritéar'; eadem, '*Tugas annsacht d'óigh Ghallda: dán le Piaras Feiritéar do Londainbhean*'.

<sup>10</sup> Meek, '*Duanaire Finn* and Gaelic Scotland', 29; Gillies, 'An Irish manuscript in Scotland'.

<sup>11</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 233; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 176–81.

<sup>12</sup> Ó Muraíle, *The celebrated antiquary*, 297 n. 13, 308, 381.

<sup>13</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 239; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 145. Mícheál Óg's opinion regarding the original text notwithstanding, it is generally accepted that *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* was first compiled in the fourteenth century, and, indeed, Mac

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century copies of this popular text ultimately derive from that by Mícheál mac Peadair. Another popular text with later scribes was *Cath Cluana Tarbh*, a Modern Irish prose tale based on the battle of Clontarf. Two of its four variant versions were produced by Mícheál Óg and his son, Peadar, thereby pointing to the imaginative approach adopted by the Ó Longáin family to their scribal craft, in that they engaged actively with the material at hand in exercising particular editorial judgements.<sup>14</sup>

Other prose material includes tales from the four cycles of Irish sagas. These are generally preserved in anthology-form in the Ó Longáin manuscripts, the collated work with an accompanying title being presented to the prospective reader as a worthy selection of prose in the Irish language.<sup>15</sup> Mention should also be made of a valuable collection (RIA MS 23 G 20, pp. 85–9) of Irish proverbs and pithy sayings by Mícheál Óg comprising both important lexical, grammatical and didactic material as well as the expressed wisdom of the folk mind.<sup>16</sup> Mícheál Óg, in fact, was especially interested in wisdom texts in general as borne out, for example, by RIA MS 23 G 27, most of which he wrote in 1795. Numerous extracts from the Bible and the Church Fathers form part of this volume's contents, together with *Ceasta Fhithil*, a series of maxims concerning economy presented in the form of question and answer, and a Modern Irish rendering of a medieval fifteenth-century text known as *Fearus Tighe*. Mícheál Óg's text of *Ceasta Fhithil* is the earliest of twelve to have come down to us in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Cork manuscripts, all of which belong to a textual tradition best attributed to 'the Ó Longáin school'.<sup>17</sup>

Contact with print culture, too, is evident in the contents of the family's manuscripts, whereby printed sources acted as exemplars for transcription. For instance, copies of devotional texts first published in the Irish language and in Gaelic script in the seventeenth century by the Franciscans on the Continent appear in the family's scribal corpus, as do translations into Irish of religious and didactic material originally published in Latin and English.<sup>18</sup>

Taking the above overview of scribal material together, the Ó Longáin manuscripts undoubtedly reveal this family's range of interests. They also tell us something of the sources that were available to them at the time of writing, and they greatly enhance our knowledge of scribal practice in Ireland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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It is not known when Mícheál mac Peadair Uí Longáin was born although the present writer had estimated it to be c.1693, based on the hand in a manuscript (AIHS MS 1) dated 1611, supposedly an alteration from 1711, and signed by him when he was in his eighteenth year.<sup>19</sup> This manuscript was accepted as authentic — once again by the present writer among others — but it is now thought to be a nineteenth-century copy

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Cruitín's exemplar may have been a second, fragmentary copy, now RIA MS 23 Q 16, which apparently dates from the early sixteenth century; cf. Ó Riain, 'The language of *Caithréim Thoirdealbhaigh*', 56 n. 12 and 56–7.

<sup>14</sup> Ní Úrdail, *Cath Cluana Tarbh*, 62–5, 90–7, 201–25, 251–4.

<sup>15</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 150–5; cf. nn 41 and 44 below.

<sup>16</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 157–60; see also n. 46 below.

<sup>17</sup> Ó Macháin, "'Ceasta Fhithil': buaine agus ilghnéitheacht na gaoise i litríocht na Gaeilge', 343–54.

<sup>18</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 210–20.

<sup>19</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 24 n. 39, 35, 37 n. 14, 135. AIHS MS 1 is missing today but a microfilm copy survives (NLI positive 6566).

in the hand of Ó Longáin's grandson, Peadar.<sup>20</sup> Mícheál mac Peadair spent his formative years in Ballydonohoe (Baile Uí Dhonnchú) near Glin (An Gleann) in the civil parish of Kilfergus, Co. Limerick. In a series of six poems composed by his son, Mícheál Óg, we learn that one of his father's brothers, Seán, had himself a son named Tomás, or Tom Langan (d. c.1845), who was commonly known as 'Captain Steele' in Glin because he was leader of the United Irishmen in that area. This same Tomás was transported to Australia in 1800 for his involvement in the Rebellion of 1798 and on returning to Ireland in 1817, lost an eye in a fight with a press gang.<sup>21</sup> A second brother of Mícheál mac Peadair's, Pádraig Rua, had a daughter named Siobhán who c.1741 composed the following stanza 'to a fine fishing boat' (*do bhád breá iascaireachta*) belonging to her 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 tonnthach,  
lán go giall don iasc ag teacht chugainne  
ag an gCárthach bhfial aniar ó Dheasmhúinne.*<sup>22</sup>

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

On at least three occasions, our scribe refers to himself as coming from *Gleann gan Ridire fo ríor*, 'from Glin without a Knight alas'.<sup>23</sup> We may apply this description literally to the state of affairs which came about in 1740 when the Knight of Glin, Edmond Fitzgerald (d. 1773), a Catholic, was ousted from the property in that year by his younger brother, Richard (d. 1775), who had conformed to the Established Church.<sup>24</sup> It appears that Ó Longáin was employed as land agent and rent receiver to Edmond, but on incurring the disapproval of the new Knight he was forced to leave Glin.<sup>25</sup>

Judging from manuscripts written by him in different parts of Co. Cork and south Kerry from 1740 until the early 1760s, Ó Longáin moved about considerably during those years. We find him transcribing in 1740, for example, near Castlehaven in west Carbery, and by the early 1750s he was in Dublin completing transcripts of prose tales for the renowned eighteenth-century doctor and manuscript collector, Dr. John Fergus (d. 1761).<sup>26</sup> Another of his more prominent scholarly patrons was Dr John O'Brien,

<sup>20</sup> Ó Macháin, 'Léirmheas', 234–5; de Brún, 'The Glin family and Irish poetry', 279–80; Ó Muraíle, *The celebrated antiquary*, 309.

<sup>21</sup> Ó Conchúir, 'Tomás Ó Longáin, Captaen Steele'; cf. Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 95–9, 109 and Culhane, 'Traditions of Glin and its neighbourhood', 86–7, 88–9, 95.<sup>22</sup> RIA MS 23 G 24, p. 67. The orthography in this and other excerpts quoted from the manuscripts has been normalised, while accompanying translations, unless otherwise stated, are by the present writer.

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<sup>23</sup> RIA MS 24 A 15, p. 58; Galway MS G 70, p. 154; NLI MS G 534, p. 409.

<sup>24</sup> Culhane, 'Traditions of Glin and its neighbourhood', 82; Gaughan, *The knights of Glin*, 70; Byrne, 'The four brothers', 28.<sup>25</sup> Ó Donnchadha, 'Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin', 224.

<sup>25</sup> Ó Donnchadha, 'Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin', 224.

<sup>26</sup> According to his grandson, Seosamh, RIA MS 23 O 37 '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 Ó Catháin, 'John Fergus MD, eighteenth-century doctor'.

Roman Catholic Bishop of Cloyne and Ross (1748–1769), who is best known for his Irish-English dictionary *Focalóir Gaidhilge-Sax-Bhéarla or an Irish-English dictionary* (1768). Among the scribal texts provided by our scribe for Dr O’Brien are genealogies relevant to the Bishop’s ancestors, the O’Briens of Dál gCais in Thomond, which Ó Longáin compiled between 1760 and 1762. It is not unlikely, therefore, that he was included among those scholar-scribes 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>27</sup>

Ó Longáin returned at least once to his native Limerick in the early 1750s when he is mentioned as the complainant in a warrant (*barántas*) by the poet Aindrias Mac Craith, *alias* ‘An Mangaire Sógach’ (c.1709–c.1794), against Seán Ó Tuama (d. 1775) in January 1753 as follows:

*Whereas d’áitigh araoir dom láthair  
saoirfhear sáirghlic sítheoilte,  
aon den dáimh ba chaoine cáil,  
is groífhear grámhar gaoisghleoite,  
gur shín ina dháil le tíocht thar Máigh ...*<sup>28</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 ...

Not only did this ‘noble man’ cross the Maigue, but Mac Craith’s introduction to his poem informs us that Ó Longáin was at that time on an extensive visit in Co. Limerick (*ar mórchuid i gContae Luimnigh*). Accordingly, he must have come into contact with other local Maigue poets (*filí na Máighe*). This is all the more likely, of course, given that he, too, composed verse and a handful of compositions have come down to us which Micheál Óg, in his manuscripts, attributes to his father. Two contrasting examples will suffice here. In the first, a poem of one stanza, Ó Longáin senior admits to personal circumstances so distressful as to force him to place a bet on one of his manuscripts:

*Dearbhaim duitse a chumann ’sa mhíle stór,  
mo leabhar dá imirt nach cuirfinn ar shlí dhá shórt,  
acht mo charaid go bhfuilid sin uile san chill ar feo,  
’s me dealbh gan ghustal ná pingin don chíos im dhóid.*<sup>29</sup>

I swear to you o beloved and most dear one, I would in no way gamble on my book, except that all my friends are decaying in the cemetery, and I am destitute without riches or a penny to my name for the rent.

Ireland’s distressful circumstances are his concern in the second example, a political poem of the *aisling*-type (8 stanzas) beginning *Im aisling ar mo leabaidh is mé aréir*

<sup>27</sup> O’Brien, *Focalóir Gaidhilge-Sax-Bhéarla*, xli. On Dr O’Brien, see Coombes, *A Bishop of penal times*; Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí*, 218–22; Ó Catháin, ‘An Irish scholar abroad’; Mac Cana, *Collège des Irlandais*, 97–113.

<sup>28</sup> Ó Fiannachta, *An barántas*, 137.

<sup>29</sup> RIA MS 23 N 32, p. 97.

*im luí* ('In my vision while lying on my bed last night'). Composed, according to Mícheál Óg, in 1752, the prophetic message by the female *persona* Ireland is that following the imminent triumph of the Jacobite ruler Charles son of James III (*Cormac saormhac Shéamais óig*), the Irish are guaranteed freedom from foreign oppression — perhaps within a month:

*'Admhaim im labhartha gan bhréig,' ar sí,  
'nach fada bhias an galar so ar maothadh im chroí:  
geallaim duit sul dtaga anois acht b'fhéidir mí  
gur ceannasach bheidh araidshliocht na nGael 'na suí.*

*Atá dalta liom i Sagsana is éachtach gníomh  
is sealbh aige in Albain roimh rae mar mhaoid,  
caithbhíle mear meanmnach gan staonadh puinn,  
go snaidhme liom go ceannasach mar chéile arís.*

*Leanaidhse na haitheanta do shaoraigh Maois  
is ceanglaidh go carthanach 'n úr dtréadaibh Críost;  
biaid Danair oilc an charrbhais dá dtraochadh ' shíor,  
idir shleasaibh Styx is Acheron gan réiteach slí.*

*Nach soirbh an scéal do phréimhshliocht Eoghan is Chuinn,  
cogadh na bpléasc a' caochadh Sheóirse ' shíor!  
Tá cosmhalacht d'éis an lae do leóig na gcríoch  
go mbiaidh Cormac saormhac Shéamais óig 'na rí.<sup>30</sup>*

'I openly admit,' said she, 'that this distress won't be long stirring in my heart: I promise you before perhaps a month is out that the noble race of the Gaels will reign supreme.

A hero of mine most powerful of action is in England and he already holds sway in Scotland as they boast, a swift courageous battle-warrior without flinching much, may [he] be joined victoriously to me as a spouse again.

Follow ye the commandments that freed Moses and bind Christ lovingly into your flock; the evil carousing foreigners will be subjugated forever, stuck between the banks of the Styx and Acheron.

Is it not good news for the original race of Eoghain and Conn, the explosive war constantly blinding George! It appears after all to the experts of the lands that Charles, noble son of young James, will be king.'

Returning to the prose texts copied by Mícheál mac Peadair Uí Longáin for Dr John Fergus in the early 1750s, a colophon is included there, which suggests our scribe's awareness of, and maybe even his slight impatience with, the itinerant nature of his life: writing 'in the town of Dublin' (*i mBaile na Duibhlinne Aithe Cliath*), he informs the reader that his work was written *le seachráin siaruíge ó Ghleann an Ridire i gContae Luimne san Múmha[i]n* — 'with everlasting wandering from Glin in

<sup>30</sup> RIA MS 23 C 8, pp. 347–8; RIA MS 23 G 24, pp. 238–9; UCD Ferriter MS 33, pp. 106–7.

County Limerick in Munster'.<sup>31</sup> He settled down nonetheless towards the end of his life in the civil parish of Dunbulloge (Dún Bolg), Co. Cork, where in the first half of 1766 he transcribed material for poet and fellow scribe Roibeárd (mac Tomás) Breatnach (d. 1810).<sup>32</sup> We do not know what attracted Ó Longáin to settle in this parish, 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 and lands of Carrignavar (Carraig na bhFear), was married to Grace Fitzgerald, who, it is claimed, belonged to the Fitzgeralds of Glin. Charles died without issue in 1761 and Daniel's son, also Daniel, succeeded in Carrignavar.<sup>33</sup>

Mícheál mac Peadair was buried in the McCarty burying place, Whitechurch, a fact that he himself seems to have 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>34</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.

In an obituary in honour of his father, Mícheál Óg had the following to say:

*Beannacht Dé, na Naomh agus na n-aingeal le hanam an deighfhir ghrámhair  
Ghaelaigh ghasa 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>35</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>36</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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<sup>31</sup> RIA MS 23 O 37, p. 95.

<sup>32</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 88, 91; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 42. For Breatnach and his manuscripts, see Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 4–5.

<sup>33</sup> Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the landed gentry of Ireland*, 433; McCarthy, *The MacCarthys of Munster*, 223; cf. Ó M[urchadha], 'Mícheál Ó Longáin', 50, and John Mulcahy's paper in the present volume.

<sup>34</sup> de Brún, 'The Glin Family and Irish poetry', 282.

<sup>35</sup> RIA MS 23 N 12, p. 208. *Móin Mhór* above appears to be located near Glanmire (Hogan, *Onomasticon Goedelicum*, s.n. Móin Mór).

<sup>36</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.

The above tribute is the first of two composed by Mícheál Óg in 1817, and he composed other similar tributes to his father in 1813 and in 1833.<sup>37</sup> These alone remind us of an overall feature regarding this native man of letters: Mícheál Óg 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 material together, we have a valuable record of events in his 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, Mícheál Óg was also a competent poet. Over three-hundred-and-fifty of his poems have survived in the manuscripts, forty-one of which were published some ten years ago,<sup>38</sup> while a complete anthology is currently being edited by Professor Breandán Ó Conchúir. This poetic corpus, too, provides a rich source of biographical information.

We may begin by paraphrasing one intriguing autobiographical account written by Mícheál Óg in 1791 when he was about twenty-four years of age.<sup>39</sup> He tells his reader that he was born on 1 August 1766 at Béal Átha Maghair in the parish of Dunbulloge, 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.<sup>40</sup> On his return, Mícheál Óg writes that he went to school (*chuas ar scoil*), but interestingly, he goes on to say that he became ashamed 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 was back at school again studying arithmetic and learning Latin during the next year.

This unique autobiographical account is striking for the personal light it throws on the man himself, of course, but it also sets out what would eventually emerge as Mícheál Óg's ambition to produce manuscripts and see his scribal craft through to the next Ó Longáin generation. For instance, we get a sense of the importance for him of learning 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 the colophons and notes addressed by him to his 'dear reader' (*léitheoir ionmhain*). The account of 1791, however, is not addressed to any particular 'dear reader'. It smacks rather of an entry in a personal diary, whereby the writer is taking stock of his life up to that year but is looking ahead at the same time to a new stage which would turn out to be one devoted to scholarship and learning.

This brings us 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 that occurs frequently in his colophons — we find it from in the earliest manuscript (Maynooth MS M 57, part a) which he began writing 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*

<sup>37</sup> RIA MS 23 N 15, p. 326, RIA MS 23 N 11, p. 238, and RIA MS 23 N 12, p. 198, respectively.

<sup>38</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*.

<sup>39</sup> Ó M[urchadha], 'Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin (1766–1837)', 54; Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 101; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 43–4.

<sup>40</sup> He may be the same Fr Ó Cearbhaill who was appointed to Dunbollogue on the death of Fr Ióseph Mac Cairteáin in 1752 and who was a loyal patron of another of the parish's man of letters, Seaghán Ó Murchadha na Ráithíneach (1700–1762); see Torna, *Seán na Ráithíneach*, 349, 468; cf. Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 168, 171.

(‘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, let us take the following passage from an introduction to an anthology of prose and poetry compiled by Mícheál Óg in 1816, which he called *An Coileach Feá* (‘The Woodcock’):

*A léitheoir dhil ionmhain ag so An Coileach Feá .i. leabhar ina bhfuilid suim mhaith tuarascbhála ar chogaí agus ar choinbhliochtaibh na nGael féin le chéile iarna gcur san gcairt mbig-se anois ar fhorálamh Éamainn Haicéad a gCorca noch do dhíol go maith as a scríobh agus sin ar mhaithe leis an nGaidheilg agus d’fhonn cúnamh fuascalta do thabhairt uirthi ón ndorchadas ndearmadach ndanartha ina 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>41</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.

Revival of the language was central, then, but so too was the hope for support, both moral and financial, for himself and his scribal confrères in promoting the language. According to the heading accompanying one of his poems, in fact, his hope is that the poem might be a means of ‘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’ (*ag gríosú bhfine Gael fán nGaeilge d’fhoghlaim agus do choimeád ar bun agus ar buaintseasamh, amhail ba dleacht agus ba chúí dóibh do dhéanamh*).<sup>42</sup> Dating from 1800, the same year as the creation of the union between Great Britain and Ireland, the poem offers encouragement to fellow scribes and prospective patrons alike to work together for the sake of the language:

*Gach suaircfhear slachtmhar seolta  
'gá bhfuil puinn dár seinsceolta,  
má tá gur gabhadh a [= i] ngrafadh,  
tugadh iad dá n-athghrafadh.<sup>43</sup>*

Every civil man, well-favoured and educated, who possesses many of our old stories, if it is the case that they have been written, let [him] give them to be rewritten.

<sup>41</sup> Manchester MS 76, p. iii.

<sup>42</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 106.

<sup>43</sup> From the poem beginning *Tagraim libh, a chlann Éibhir* (15 qq); cf. Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 106–8.

Therein lies the corollary to revival from darkness and oblivion, namely the necessity to commit texts to writing and re-writing so as to ensure their conservation for a wider readership in the future.

In 1802, Mícheál Óg set about compiling a list ‘of nice devotional books’ (*de leabhraibh dheasa dhiagachta*) which he intended to transcribe and keep in his own possession. By 1808 this literary canon, ‘which was enough to keep the language alive’ (*noch do ba leor chum na teangan do choimeád ar bun*), amounted to twenty-one items in all and included Geoffrey Keating’s *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* as well as devotional texts both by Keating again and by Aodh Mac Aingil, Andrew Donlevy and others, and anthologies bearing intriguing titles such as *An Díolúnach* (‘The Mercenary’) and *An Chaorthann Chumhra* (‘The Fragrant Rowan Tree’).<sup>44</sup> By 1815, Mícheál Óg was confident that the scribal texts in his possession up that point would be ‘sufficient to compile or ma[ke a] pretty library of our native tongue’.<sup>45</sup> There was also, of course, a practical side to this stock-taking exercise: it was important that he himself knew what he actually owned, personal items, indeed, which he intended to keep in the family. This he makes clear, for instance, in a letter to Pól in 1813 warning his son not to give a certain ‘little old book’ (*seinleabhar beag*) on loan to anyone because ‘the law of borrowing is to break the borrower / to break the thing borrowed’ in that the borrower becomes the lender also of the borrowed item (*dlí na hiasachta an t-iarrach do bhriseadh*) — advice which, incidentally, also appears in Mícheál Óg’s substantial collection of proverbs published by T.F. O’Rahilly. He continues by telling Pól that though his father wrote ‘many a fine Irish book’ (*ioma leabhar breá Gaeilge*), he himself possesses but a few of them because he was but a child at the time of his death.<sup>46</sup>

Turning again to some further biographical details concerning Mícheál Óg the man: down to the year 1796, we find him moving around Carrignavar transcribing manuscript material in private houses. During this time, he recorded his weight of ‘10 Stones + 10 lb’.<sup>47</sup> He had planned to emigrate to America early in the year 1795 and completing a personal anthology of Irish literature (RIA MS 23 G 21) in time to be able to bring it across the Atlantic became a matter of particular urgency:

*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 thíre féin a bheith agam, óir ní fheadar an dtiocfainn thar n-ais go bráth.*<sup>48</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.

Emigration was not to be, however, and one wonders whether his remaining in Ireland was influenced by the fact that he had fallen in love at that time with a local woman. Writing in Killydonoghoe (Cill Uí Dhonnchú) in the summer of 1795, for example, he concluded his work with the following admission:

<sup>44</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 59 n. 51, 63.

<sup>45</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 99.

<sup>46</sup> O’Rahilly, *Miscellany of Irish proverbs*, 14; Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 116; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 109–10.

<sup>47</sup> RIA MS 23 G 20, p. 231, dated 26 January, 1792, ‘at Glanmire Hill’.

<sup>48</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 103; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 47.

*Gonab é sin Cómhrac Firdia agus Chúchuluinn go n-uige sin. Iar na ghraphadh liomsa Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin chuim mh'úsáide féin a gCeill Uí Dhonncha i bparóiste Ghleanna Maghair i dtigh Thomáis Uí Chiosáin, an t-ochtú lá déag don mhí August san mbliain d'aois ár dTighearna Íosa Críost .1795. Agus san .29. blian dom aois féin. Do bhíos i ngrá le Máire Ní Chiosáin an tan sin. Dia linn.*<sup>49</sup>

So that is *Cómhrac 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, indicating thereby that Mícheál Óg may have used it either as a means of keeping his communication secret or as a way of conveying special meaning to an otherwise straightforward colophon.

Some weeks before this, on 20 July 1795, our scribe called this same cipher 'golden ogham' (*ogham órga*), and he outlined by means of an example five vowels, three diphthongs (*ao, ia, ua*), two digraphs (*ea, oi*), a nasal (*ng*) and lenition. This he followed with a number of quatrains in the script and concluded in an accompanying colophon, also in *ogham órga*, that its purpose was 'for my own use and that of the Irish soldiers' (*chuim m'úsáide féin agus na n-óglach nGaelach*).<sup>50</sup> The context of his statement is not insignificant given the overall conspiratorial expansion in Cork and its hinterland at that 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>51</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 argued elsewhere by the present writer, the manuscript evidence strongly suggests that he himself, in fact, was the original creator of this script.<sup>52</sup>

The necessity for encryption would soon present itself as a likely option for our scribe when 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 (1763–1798).<sup>53</sup> One of these poems, he notably informs us, is accompanied by the 'air Rights of Man' (*fonn Córa Duine*) while another of his

<sup>49</sup> RIA MS 23 G 21, p. 430; cf. Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 283 n. 684, and Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 55 n. 38.

<sup>50</sup> RIA MS 23 N 20, pp. 5–6.

<sup>51</sup> Dickson, *Old world colony*, 456–67; Ó Coindealbháin, 'The United Irishmen in Cork county', 117–22.

<sup>52</sup> Ní Úrdail, 'Ogham órdha in den späteren irisch-gälischen Handschriften'.

<sup>53</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 70–5, 77–94, 100–4; see also Ó Buachalla, 'From Jacobite to Jacobin', 85–96.

manuscripts includes instructions, in English, for sword exercises.<sup>54</sup> Such was his success in recruiting members for the United Irishmen in Carrignavar 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, 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>55</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 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 mhó ainnir mhilis mhúinte  
agus leanbh fireann fionn leis,  
is fear breá cliste cumtha  
do fúigeadh ar feo.*<sup>56</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 eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scribes, 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 (Baile na gCloch), Carrignavar.<sup>57</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 Ballynabortagh (Baile na bPórtach). In 1809 we find him teaching further afield in Caherdrinny (Cathair Dhroinge) in northeast Cork and by 1813–1814 he styled himself an *oide léinn* and *oide scoile*, or ‘school teacher’, in Glanmire Church.<sup>58</sup>

Mícheál Óg 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 chlainne féin agus cháich*). Official documentation of his role as teacher has also served in the form of a

<sup>54</sup> *Aisling chonarc tríom néal im leaba dhom aréir* (7 stt) in RIA MS 23 G 21, pp. 510–11; RIA MS 23 N 14, p. 340 and continued on p. 313, headed ‘Table of the Five Guards’.

<sup>55</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 105; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 50–1.

<sup>56</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 90.

<sup>57</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 105; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 50.

<sup>58</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 66 n. 84, n. 85; cf. Ní Shéaghda, ‘Gairmeacha beatha roinnt scríobhaithe ón 18ú agus ón 19ú céad’, 570.

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 the civil parish of Templeusque (Teampall Loiscthe) with twenty-eight males and twelve females in attendance.<sup>59</sup> In May 1826, 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>60</sup> Pragmatically, this proselytising mission provided him with a source of income, but Mícheál Óg is likely to have recognised the opportunity it provided to promote the Irish language itself. After all, he had written some ten years before this that 'One of the best methods for preserving the [Irish] Language is to make the schoolmasters teach the catechisms in Irish, especially in country places'.<sup>61</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 ghasa '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 run by Seán Ó Deasúna in Inishannon near Bandon, while two years later he notes that Peadar was also 'at school' in Inishannon. In April 1833, his stanza beginning *A Uí Dhúnaí 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>62</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>63</sup>

Our scribe's personal circumstances were particularly difficult in the early decades of the nineteenth century, a fact he poignantly captures thus:

*Mo thurainn, mo chreach, mo cheas mo mhíle léan,  
mo thuirse, mo dheacair chneadach chnaoite ghéar!  
Iomad na gcean ag teacht im shlí gach lae,  
's nach tigeann liom leath mo bheart go cruinn do léamh.*

*A Mhuire na bhfeart 'sa Bhanaltra aoird mhic Dé,  
guighse do leanbh geal mo dhíon ó bhaol,  
ó iomarca cealg cleas is claoine an tsaoil,  
na spioraide nach maith is neart na clí nach réidh.*<sup>64</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Education Commissioners *Second report*, 910–11. The townland of Coole West (An Chúil Thiar) is today in the civil parish of Rathcooney, Co. Cork.

<sup>60</sup> de Brún, *Scriptural instruction in the vernacular*, 87, 319.

<sup>61</sup> Maynooth MS C 100 (c), item 2, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> RIA MS 23 N 32, p. 66; RIA MS 23 C 19, p. 32; NLI MS G 306, p. 125; de Brún, *Scriptural instruction in the vernacular*, 218–19.

<sup>63</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 298 n. 51; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 119.

<sup>64</sup> RIA MS 23 N 14, p. 92, accompanied by the date 1800; RIA MS 23 C 18, p. 213, accompanied by the date 1801.

Alas, my woe, my affliction, my thousand sorrows, my weariness, my severe wound-giving, powerless, enervating distress! Excess of duties [are] coming my way every day, and I unable to anticipate half my plights exactly.

Almighty Mary and high Nurse of God's son, implore your beloved child to protect me from harm, from an excess of life's deceits, tricks and iniquity, of bad spirit and volatile strength of heart.

Mícheál Óg married Mary Lyons, *alias* Máire Ní Leidhin, in his mid-thirties and along with a stepdaughter, Mary Crowley (b. c.1797), he had seven more children to provide for: twins Peadar and Pól (b. 1801), Pádraig (b. 1805), Neans (b. 1809), Nóra (b. 1812), Seán (b. 1815 / 16) and Seosamh (b. 1817).<sup>65</sup> Mícheál Óg's wife is further identified in the following heading accompanying a quatrain of farewell to her by a second Máire Ní Leidhin, wife of Cork scribe and poet Finín Ó hAllúráin (*fl.* 1833–1851): *Máire Ní Leidhin beanchéile Fhínín Uí Allúráin dochum Máire Ní Leidhin .i. bean chéile Mhíchíl Uí Longáin*, 'Máire Ní Leidhin wife of Finín Ó hAllúráin to Máire Ní Leidhin, i.e. wife of Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin'.<sup>66</sup> Seán Ó Longáin fell seriously ill and almost died in August 1819, thereby prompting the following invocation:

*A Mhuire, a Mháthair bhúidh,  
a ghrá, a rúin gan cháim gan locht,  
fóirse ár Seáinín dúinn  
ó tá ar a chúl go tláith anocht.*

*Leanbh beag banamhail deas  
dá dtugas gean is bheadh dom réir,  
is do ghrádar mo chlann im dhiaidh:  
go ngráidh Dia sinn go léir!*<sup>67</sup>

Mary, gentle Mother, love, o darling without blemish without fault, save our Johnny for us since [he] is laid low tonight.

A wee bonny nice baby to whom I gave affection as would be my wont, and my family after me loved [him]: may God love us all!

The child survived, as borne out by subsequent documentary evidence.<sup>68</sup> During the next year (1820), we find Mícheál Óg praying to St. Joseph that his son of the same name be saved 'from terrible sickness' (*ó thinneas ghéifeach*):

<sup>65</sup> Cf. the following list compiled in 1827 or 1828 by Seosamh Ó Longáin: 'Michael O Longan 62 Peter O Longan 26 years Paul O Longan 26 years Patrick O Longan 22 years John O Longan 12 years Joseph O Longan 10 years Mary Lyns [*sic*] 51 years Nancy Longan 19 years Hanora Longan 15 years' (NLI MS G 154, p. 143, reproduced in Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 244). As will emerge further down, Mary Crowley died accidentally in 1821.

<sup>66</sup> NLI MS G 154, p. 86. For Ó hAllúráin, of Templemartin (Teampall Mártan), northwest of Bandon, Co. Cork, and his manuscripts, see Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí*, 80–1.

<sup>67</sup> RIA MS 23 C 19, p. 74.

<sup>68</sup> According to the marriage records for St. Joseph's Church Glanmire, John Long married Mary Reilly on 1 August 1845, with Patrick Long and Ellen Cooney of 'Auinessilley [Áth na Sailí or Sallybrook] Pike' as witnesses; see also n. 65 above and n. 101 below.

*A Ióseph naofa, a chéile Mhuire Mháthair,  
is tá cómhachtach céimghlan caomhcheart cliste cráifeach,  
fóir mo lao beag féin ó thinneas gháifeach,  
is go deo lem shaol bead baoch do t'fhiortaibh náomhdha.<sup>69</sup>*

O holy Joseph, o spouse of Mother Mary, who is powerful, of pure rank, gentle and just, able, devout, save my own little darling from terrible sickness, and I will be forever grateful during my lifetime for your blessed help.

Further distress befell the family when Mary, Mícheál Óg's stepdaughter, was accidentally killed at Pope's Quay in Cork city in April 1821. Ó Longáin describes the circumstances of her death in a heading accompanying a lament 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>70</sup>

The terrible loss moved him to compose two further laments in Irish as well as the following prose eulogy — a fine description by our scribe of his stepdaughter's qualities as a human being:

*Ar maidean Dia Luain timcheall a deich don chlog is ea do marbhadh agus do báthadh Máire Ní Chrualaoi ar an Laoi i gCorca. Dob é sin an dara lá d'Abrán isin mbliain 1821.*

*Do bhí sí timcheall .24. bliana d'aois an tan sin. Do bhí mar an gcéanna deacháileach agus níorbh iongna sin óir do bhí sí go blasta, binnbhriathrach, béasach, beachtmhúinte, cneasta, ciallmhar, diaga, deashómplach, éifeachtach, firinneach, gasta, grámhar, gáireach, gealgháireach, loinneach, lúthgháireach, múinte, milis, modhail, miochair, naíonta, nuachrothach, oilte, álainn, oirdhearc, páirteach, ríoga, roscghorm, súgach, soilbhir, séimh, suairc, sochroíoch, sochaideartha le deadhaoinibh agus dochaideartha le drochdhaoinibh, tuigseach, truamhéileach, trócaireach, umhal, urramach, uasalaiigeantach, déarcúil, daonnachtach do bhochtaibh Dé. Go raibh Dia lena hanam. Bíodh fós.<sup>71</sup>*

On Monday morning about ten o'clock Mary Crowley was killed and drowned at the Lee in Cork. That was the second day of April in the year 1821.

She was about twenty-four years of age at that time. She was highly regarded as well, and that was no surprise since she was eloquent, sweetspoken, well-behaved, perfect-mannered, kind, sensible, devout, exemplary, wise, truthful,

<sup>69</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 125.

<sup>70</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 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 O'Mahony, *In the shadows*, 34–7.

<sup>71</sup> RIA MS 23 G 24, p. 420. There follows (p. 421) a lament beginning *Maidean Luain im shuan do ghlacas bíogadh* (4 stt). Mícheál Óg's second lament in Irish on the death of his stepdaughter (RIA MS 23 G 25, pp. 64–5) begins *Is aithreach liom 's is dubhach lem shaol ar fad* (7 stt); cf. Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 126–7.

clever, loving, mirthful, joyful, glad, polite, sweet, gracious, affable, beautiful, fresh, cultivated, lovely, illustrious, convivial, stately, blue-eyed, merry, gentle, pleasant, kind-hearted, sociable with good people and unsociable with bad people, understanding, compassionate, merciful, humble, reverent, noble-minded, charitable [and] clement with God's needy. May God be with her soul. May [He] be still.

Returning now to Mícheál Óg himself, 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:

*Cuirim druim le dul go hIfreann agus re peaca marbh do dhéanamh rem thoil go bráth ná choíche — oh! gráin ar an bpeaca marbh — éirí 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' scribhneoireacht 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>72</sup>

By 1807 Mícheál Óg and his family had returned to Cork, settling first in Kerrypike near the Lee (*Cúil Uí Mhurchú cois Laoi*) and then once again in Carrignavar. He 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>73</sup>

The next five years marked the beginning of the most prolific stage of Mícheál Óg's output as a scribe. Ó Floinn 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 (1815–1847), and Henry Joseph Heard, Church of Ireland Vicar General of the united dioceses of Cork and Ross (1815–1833). 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

<sup>72</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 58.

<sup>73</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí*, 69–77.

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>74</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 (1804–1820). This period in Cork, then, was a good one for Mícheál Óg’s scribal craft (and indeed for that of his sons also) and he became a notable contributor to the network of scribes who flourished in the city in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The context of his work changed considerably, 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 well-to-do patrons were English-speaking, original material in Irish is increasingly accompanied in his manuscripts by English translations.

The numerous opportunities afforded Mícheál Óg to ply his scribal craft for patrons interested in the Irish language during the five years after 1815 must surely have developed a renewed sense of his own importance as a man of erudition and learning. We may note in this regard his poem of address to Bishop Murphy in the Winter of 1818, requesting that he be provided with a nice warm suit for hardy days ahead. Ó Longáin’s is a confident tone of entitlement that he, as a poet, be properly provided for by his patron:

*Le suairceas urrama cuirim i suim dom thriath  
an fuacht ag druidim linn tuigeadh ’s an geimhreadh iar dtiacht;  
ba dhual do file mar mise gan mhoill do riar,  
níor mhuar dom culaith dheas chluthar ba díon dom chliabh.*<sup>75</sup>

With the height of respect I make known to my lord that he understand that the cold is moving towards us and winter has set in; it would be proper for him to provide soon for a poet like myself: I would need a nice warm suit as a covering for my body.

To this, the poem’s final stanza, our scribe added *Agus fuaras í* (‘And I received it’) which, for all its terseness, recalls what was at the heart of the centuries-old relationship of poet and patron in medieval Ireland whereby the poet’s *dán* in the sense of ‘poem’ yielded the patron’s *dán* or ‘gift’, ‘something bestowed’.<sup>76</sup> We may recall in passing here Mícheál Óg’s pride in his family’s reputation for learning. In his aforementioned autobiographical account of 1791, for example, his was a palpable shame at having to interrupt schooling to turn his hand to cow herding and delivering milk in churns — menial work never undertaken by any of his forebears. He was

<sup>74</sup> NLI MS G 96, pp. 187–94 (at p. 192); cf. Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 98.

<sup>75</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 120; cf. Ó Fiannachta, ‘Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin 1766–1837’, 226.

<sup>76</sup> Watkins, ‘The etymology of Irish *dúan*’, 272–3.

equally proud of his forebears' established credentials as effective rulers in medieval Gaelic Ireland. He defers on such occasions in his manuscripts to Seaán Mór Ó Dubhagáin (d. 1372), professional historian to Uí Mhaine, whose metrical roll call of illustrious Irish families, *Triallam timcheall na Fódla* ('Let us journey around Fódla'), includes Uí Longáin, descendants of Uí Bhreasail Iarthair in Oirialla, i.e. an area comprising large portions of counties Louth, Armagh and Monaghan.<sup>77</sup> Alternatively, Mícheál Óg gives *Teach Táil* (the people of Dál gCais in present-day counties Clare and Limerick) as the former patrimony of Uí Longáin. In such instances, he alludes to the poem beginning *Tuilleadh feasa ar Éirinn óigh* ('More knowledge about perfect Ireland') by 'Mac Fearghail' (*recte* Giolla-na-naomh Ó hUidhrín (d. 1420)), and he cites by way of illustration the couplet *gnáith air mhíonmhágh Tíge Táil / fine líonmhar Uí Longáin* ('Bounteous [or populous] Uí Longáin usually [are] on the smooth plain of Teach Táil').<sup>78</sup> The second line replaces *fine líonmhar Ó Luáin* in Ó hUidhrín's original<sup>79</sup> — an emendation doubtless prompted by Mícheál Óg's desire to count his ancestors among those families associated with the 'perfect Ireland' of the past!

The period from 1820 to his death in 1837 sees our scribe negotiating difficulties once again, including even the prospect of abject poverty, due to a sharp decline in patronage. In April 1823, for example, he addressed the following two stanzas *do mháthair Pheadair is Phóil* ('to the mother of Peadar and Pól'):

*A spéirbhean dheas mhaorga na gcúach gcas mbuí,  
is léan liom ná féadaim ón bhfuacht tu ' dhíon,  
acht an t-aon Mhac dár saora do chuaigh sa chraoibh,  
dod léigean gan éislinn<sup>80</sup> go buan dod chlainn.*

*Ós léir tu le tréimhse gan fuaimeant tís,  
is gan éadach dod chaomhna ar chruas ná síon,  
Réx geal na naomh duit go luath mar ghuím  
do réiteach do ghéibheann-sa a shuaircbhean chaoín.<sup>81</sup>*

O proper, graceful, beautiful woman of the blonde curly locks, it grieves me that I am unable to protect you from the cold, but the only Son who died on the cross to save us is keeping you from harm for your children.

As it is clear that you have been for some time without a proper household, without clothes to protect you from hardship or bad weather, I pray thus that the bright King of the saints support you soon to relieve your great distress o gentle, civil woman.

<sup>77</sup> Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 31. For Ó Dubhagáin and his poem, see Carney, *Topographical poems*, vii–xi, 1–34.

<sup>78</sup> RIA MS 23 N 13, p. 178; RIA MS 23 E 15, p. 275. For Ó hUidhrín and his poem, see Carney, *Topographical poems*, vii–xi, 35–63; cf. Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 32.

<sup>79</sup> Carney, *Topographical poems*, 56 line 1524.

<sup>80</sup> MS *eisling*, reproducing Mícheál Óg's pronunciation of final slender *nn* — a feature today in the Irish of Muskerry and Ring; cf. Ua Súilleabháin, 'Gaeilge na Mumhan', 488.

<sup>81</sup> NLI MS G 103, p. 42. Mícheál Óg produced a second, longer version (5 stt) in Maynooth MS M 97, p. 295, although in this instance the poem was headed *duine dáirire cct dá mhnaoi féin* ('a serious person cct to his own wife').

From this period too came Mícheál Óg's fine poem, possibly his finest, *Fuacht na scailpe-se* (1823), in which he lays bare his personal state of desperation while also offering an illuminating insight into the more general state of affairs for the poor in Ireland 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 tsuaircbean chneasta, a mbanaltra bhéilbhinn sin;  
cruas na reachta so ag Gallaibh dár ngéirdhíbirt,  
do bhuair, do mheathlaigh, do mhairbh go léir mh'intinn.<sup>82</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, as well as the kind, civil woman, their sweetlipped nurse; the harshness of this law with Foreigners persecuting us fiercely, has tormented, weakened and deadened my mind entirely.

Failing sight was by now becoming a problem, as detailed in Mícheál Óg's following complaint addressed to his friend Donnchadh Ó Floinn in November of the same year (1823):

*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>83</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 in 1824 elicited a grateful poetic response for receiving such 'a jewel':

*Do fuaras seoid dheas ghleoite ghreanta ghreidhneach,  
is cé duairc mo shnódh tug spórtmhar seascair saibhir me;  
níl buairt ná breo ná brón ná ch blasta a leighiseann,  
's is nuaghlan córach domhsa a chasadh radharc maith.<sup>84</sup>*

<sup>82</sup> Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 128.

<sup>83</sup> O'Rahilly, *Búrdúin bheaga*, 37 no. 178; Ó Fiannachta, 'Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin', 227; Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 123; Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 129.

<sup>84</sup> Six stanzas in all edited by Ó Donnchadha, *Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin*, 129–30; cf. Ó Fiannachta, 'Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin', 227.

I received a lovely, fine, beautiful, bright jewel, and though my form be surly it made me sportive, comfortable and rich; no worry or flame or sorrow exists that does not heal effectively, new and bright and affable it is for me to return to good sight.

By 1831 Ó Longáin set about selling off some of his manuscripts to prospective buyers, as, for example, to Archdeacon Thomas O’Keeffe (d. 1847), PP of Glanmire, 1828–1829; he had 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 Carrignavar, 1819–1838.<sup>85</sup> Brief commissioned work also came his way from Bishop Murphy in 1833–1834, although he declined the opportunity to produce scribal texts for the prominent Irish-language Waterford scholar Philip Barron or Pilib Barún (d. 1844), explaining his decision rather resignedly to fellow scribe, Uilliam Mac Coitir (*fl.* 1818–1835), as follows:

*Atáimse anois ar nós an tseanmhadra, rócheanúil ar mo chúinne féin, iar mbeith dhom IX agus trí fichid an chéad lá de mhís Troghain na bliana so 1835. A bhú re Dia.*<sup>86</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 and was buried in Whitechurch, and during the same month the following obituary notice was published:

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>87</sup>

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

*Le ciumhais na lice-se curtha tá séimhfhear suairc,  
do bhí múinte milis glan soineanta saor gan gruaim,*

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.corkandross.org/priestsHistorical.jsp> (consulted May 2014); for Fr Matthew Horgan, see Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí*, 83–4; McCarthy, ‘Journeying to a journal’, 8–10.

<sup>86</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí*, 132; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 90. For Mac Coitir and his manuscripts, see Ó Conchúir, *Scriobhaithe Chorcaí*, 23–4 and Ó Fiannachta, ‘Lámhscríbhinn bhreise’.

<sup>87</sup> Ua Casaide, ‘Three Irish scribes of county Cork’, 4.

*lér dhubhach gach tuirinn dá dtigeadh ar Éirinn uair,  
is guidhidh uile a dhul linn san Naomhbhrogh suas.<sup>88</sup>*

At the edge of this gravestone a gentle, pleasant man is buried, who was learned, graceful, sincere, serene, noble, loving, for whom every mauling that ever befell Ireland once was sorrowful, and pray ye all that he go with us upwards to the Holy Mansion.

Among those who mourned Mícheál Óg's death in verse was Fínín Ó hAllúráin for whom the death of his dear friend, 'the Phoenix of Generosity' (*Phoénix na Féile*), was 'a distress to declare' (*ochlán é le maíomh*).<sup>89</sup> Pádraig Ó hIonurdail (fl. 1833–1842) in his lament, beginning *Ar mo thaisteal aréir im aonar damhsa* ('While travelling last night alone'), incorporated the common motif of the countryside and its rivers mourning the dead one. In this instance, the poem traces Mícheál Óg's native parish and its hinterland as well Glin of his forebears:

*Tá Béal Átha Maghair gan mhiadh air a' scréachaigh,  
agus Poll an Choire gan tuigsint ná éifeacht,  
Baile an Roisín gan ceol binn éan ann,  
agus Carraig na bhFear ag imeacht 'na héifid.*

*Tá Corcadh na gcuan go duairc le tréimhse,  
agus a saoithe ba dual bheith suairc le tréimhse;  
tá an Laoi fá bhuairt 's a gruanna braonfhliuch,  
's an dá Ghleann Maghair fá threighid is péinbhroid.*

*Do ghoill an Bhríde go fíochmhar fraochta,  
is do ghoill an Abhainn Mhuar go huaigneach léanmhar,  
do ghoill an Fhuinseann go cíocrach céasta,  
agus i dtaobh Abhann Bige tá ag imtheacht fá néallaibh.*

*Ar chloistint do Ghleann an Ridire an scéala,  
do scread go cruaidh is do bhuaín a céadfa;  
adubhairt go tapa gurbh aithnid di féin é  
mar gurbh fhada dhá charaid go hacfainneach taobh léi.<sup>90</sup>*

Béal Átha Maghair is without honour screaming, and Poulacurry without reason or force, Riverstown without the sweet singing of birds, and Carrignavar is going wild.

Cork of the harbours is joyless for some time, as well as her wise men who would usually be cheerful; the Lee is in sorrow, her cheeks drenched, and the two Glanmires in pain and agony.

<sup>88</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 298 n. 55.

<sup>89</sup> *Mo chiach, mo dhiombáidh, mo chritheán cléibh is caoi* (11 stt) in NLI MS G 806 pp. 153–5; for Ó hAllúráin, see n. 66 above.

<sup>90</sup> Twenty-one stanzas in all accompanied by the heading 'Ar bhás Mhíchéil Óig Uí Longáinn [*sic*] noch d'éag an seachtú lá déag don mhí Muidhe [*sic*] i bp[a]róiste Charraig na bhFear in aois ár dTiarna 1837 agus Pádraig Ó [h]Ionurdail cct' (RIA MS 23 D 19, pp. 58–62); for Ó hIonurdail, probably from Carrignavar, see Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 84–5.

The River Bride cried terribly and angrily, and the Blackwater cried desolately and sorrowfully, the Funshion cried earnestly and tormentedly, and as for the Awbeg it is disappearing under clouds [of grief].

When Glin of the Knight heard the news, it screamed harshly and took leave of its senses; it quickly said that it had known of it as it was a long time since its friend was ably by its side.

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Peadar and Pól Ó Longáin were born in Ballyphilip in the parish of Glanmire during the final months of 1801, and Seosamh was born in Cork city in 1817.<sup>91</sup> This third generation of Ó Longáin scribes all 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>92</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>93</sup>

Death comes at you like wild dogs, and [for] every disgraceful bad deed that you commit they [wild dogs] will laugh bitterly at 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>94</sup>

<sup>91</sup> *Jany 31 1802 ... i mBaile Philib i bparóiste Ghleanna Maghair ... Do bhí Peadar is Pól rá[i]the d'aois a[n] uair sin nó láimh ris. Go dtuga Dia cabhair dóibh soin is damhsa maille re grása na foighde is na haithrí anocht Oíche le Bríde* ('January 31 1802 ... in Ballyphilip in the parish of Glanmire ... Peadar and Pól were three months old at that time or thereabouts. May God give them and me help as well as the graces of patience and repentance tonight, the night of [St.] Bridget'): a colophon by Mícheál Óg in RIA MS 23 N 14, p. 218. According to the records for St. Mary's Cathedral, Cork, 'Joseph of Mich[ae]l Longan and Mary Lyons' was baptised on 3 October 1817, and Daniel Sullivan and Mary Cronin acted as witnesses.

<sup>92</sup> RIA MS 23 C 19, pp. 329–30.

<sup>93</sup> O'Rahilly, *Búrdúin bheaga*, 23 no. 112; cf. Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 146; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 109.

<sup>94</sup> RIA MS 23 C 19, p. 330, a variant rendering of the sixth stanza of the poem referred to at n. 92 above.

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, thatched’) in the townland of Carrignavar in the parish of Dunbulloge, attended by seventy-eight males and forty-two females (according to the Protestant clergy) and forty-five males and twenty-five females (according to the Roman Catholic clergy).<sup>95</sup> Files in the National Archives name ‘Joseph Long’ as appointee to the newly-created national school in Whitechurch in February 1849.<sup>96</sup> Teaching, however, was clearly not a passion for the youngest of Mícheál Óg’s sons, a fact that finds mention in a report following a school inspection of Whitechurch school in 1854 as follows: ‘Teacher appears deficient in energy ... [and] is pretty constantly employed in transcribing Irish manuscripts, which may interfere with his proper vocation of schoolmaster’.<sup>97</sup>

By 1861, Seosamh was requesting the Cork antiquarian scholar John Windele (1801–1865) 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) that would rid him ‘of the drudgery of teaching and the vexatious inspection of inspectors’.<sup>98</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>99</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>100</sup> In August 1835, Peadar and his brother Seán were working as labourers for ‘D. Leary’, probably the same as the ‘Denis Leary’ whom Peadar mentioned commencing working for on 1 April 1849.<sup>101</sup> It was Peadar, too, who eventually took charge of the family holding in the townland of Knockboy as borne out by *Griffith’s Valuation* of Dunbulloge parish in 1853 where he appears as ‘Peter Long’, principal occupier of the property then valued at an annual fee of £2 10s.<sup>102</sup>

Of Mícheál Óg’s sons, only Peadar appears to have composed poetry. Two compositions by him have come down to us, the first beginning *A leabhair-se atá idir lámha le fada ’ bhliantaibh* (‘O book which I have in hand for many years’) is an apology of two stanzas for his long delay in completing a commissioned manuscript for Aindrias Ó Súilleabháin — *an faraire fáithghlic fáilteach fairsing fialmhar* (‘the

<sup>95</sup> Education Commissioners *Second report*, 906–7.

<sup>96</sup> NAI National Schools, Co. Cork ED 2/8, folio 88.

<sup>97</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 156; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 120.

<sup>98</sup> Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 156; Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 121.

<sup>99</sup> *Do bhí Peadar agus Pádraig ag obair do S[h]éamas [Ó] hÁinnle an tan sin agus Pól ag múine[adh] 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>100</sup> Lewis, *A topographical dictionary*, 654.

<sup>101</sup> ‘August 29th 1835, 98 days Peter and John had cleared with D. Leary’ (a note by Mícheál Óg in NLI MS G 154, p. 64); ‘I commenced with Denis Leary the 1st day of April 1849’ (NLI MS G 154, p. 34); cf. Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 101.

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation> (consulted June 2014).

brave fellow, wise, welcoming, generous, bountiful’).<sup>103</sup> In the second, a satire of nine stanzas beginning *A lucht iúil na Mumhan maordha* (‘O noble Munster’s knowledgeable people’), Ó Longáin echoes the contempt of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Irish scholars for the lesser classes who aped foreign settlers in Ireland and lost thereby all respect for native learning:

*A lucht iúil na Mumhan maorga,  
ag so chugaibhsi cúis mo mhéala,  
mar atáim dom fhuirse ’s dom chlipeadh le daormhac  
d’fhirshliocht Thomáis Dhuibh nár bhéasach.*

*Géag den chrann ba chranda craobhacha,  
scoilb den bhloc ba dhoichte déanta,  
slisne den tsail ba mheasa i nÉirinn,  
is arc den ál sin cránach Réamainn.*<sup>104</sup>

O noble Munster’s knowledgeable people, the cause of my sorrow is as follows:  
I am being pulled at and tormented by a base son of the true race of ignorant  
Black Thomas.

A branch of the tree of most shrivelled branches, a chip off the hardest block  
ever made, a lath of the worst willow in Ireland, and a young pig of that litter of  
Raymond.

An exact date for Peadar Ó Longáin’s death is not known but he was still alive in 1860 when he completed a transcript of the Fenian prose tale *Cath Fionntrágha* (The Battle of Ventry) in Whitechurch — his final dateable scribal contribution.<sup>105</sup>

Pól Ó Longáin acquired eleven acres of land from landowner Justin McCarty in 1822.<sup>106</sup> He resided, for some years at least, in Sallybrook (Áth na Sailí) but moved to Dublin on taking up his post as scribe for the Royal Irish Academy in 1854. He carried on cataloguing the institution’s Irish manuscripts until his death on 18 August 1866. He was buried in the Garden Section of Glasnevin cemetery — GF 232 today — although the grave itself is unmarked. ‘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>107</sup> He had married Maria Hickey (c.1833–1894) two years before this and the couple had eight children during their years in

<sup>103</sup> RIA MS 23 E 16, p. 401; cf. Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 107.

<sup>104</sup> Ní Úrdail, ‘Ein irisches Schmähgedicht aus dem neunzehnten Jahrhundert’, 206; cf. Ó Briain, ‘Satire in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Gaelic poetry’, 127–30.

<sup>105</sup> *Gurab é sin Cath Fionntrágha go n-uige sin. Iar na sgríobha[dh] le Peadar mac Mhichíl Uí Longáin san mbliain 1860*, ‘So that that is Cath Fionntrágha thus far. Having been written by Peadar son of Mícheál Ó Longáin in the year 1860’ (RIA MS 23 O 46, p. 169).

<sup>106</sup> Ó Murchadha, ‘Mícheál Óg Ó Longáin (1766–1837)’, 13 n. 20; Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí*, 122; Ní Shéaghda, ‘Gairmeacha beatha roinnt scríobhaithe ón 18ú agus ón 19ú céad’, 572. According to Lewis (*A topographical dictionary*, 567–8), Carrignavar was the seat of Justin McCarty (1786–1864), grandson of Daniel (n. 33 above), in 1837.

<sup>107</sup> <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation> (consulted June 2014).

Cork.<sup>108</sup> By the second half of the 1860s they were living in 24 North Summer Street (off the North Circular Road), Dublin, where three more children were born.<sup>109</sup>

In the early 1860s, however, Seosamh Ó Longáin was preparing to emigrate to Australia, and the Council of the Royal Irish Academy resolved at its meeting of 3 November 1862 that the following letter be referred to the Committee of Antiquities:

Whitechurch, Oct. 29, 1862

Dear Sir,

I have been thinking as Mr Curry's paper copy of the Book of Lismore is incomplete, that the Academy might buy a paper copy of the other portion in order to complete his. If they should think fit to do so, I have a paper copy of it, this is, of the Cork portion, written on fine, thick, large paper, line for line, and letter for letter with the original, which I intend selling, as I am preparing to go to Australia. If they will buy it, they can have it for 9 pounds!! Amongst my other manuscripts I have a very rare and valuable collection of poems, 37 in number which I copied from the fragment of a manuscript written in the year 1712–3 which I will sell for 5 pounds.

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<sup>108</sup> The marriage of Joseph Long and Maria Hickey of the townland of 'Gurteenastuka' (Gurteenastooke) 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) and Margaret (1865). The eldest child, Mary, married Jeremiah Joseph MacSweeney, clerk at the Royal Irish Academy (1869–1908). Their eldest son, in turn, Patrick MacSweeney (1875–1935), entered Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, as a theology student in 1903, was ordained in 1907 and appointed Professor of English at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, in 1912. His publications include *Caithréim Conghail Cláiringhnigh* and *A Group of Nation-Builders*, and he was also editor of the *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* for the year 1913. See Breathnach and Ní Mhurchú, *1882–1982 beathaisnéis a trí*, 59; Corish, *Maynooth College 1795–1995*, 469; obituary notices in the *Maynooth College Calendar* (1935–1936) and the *Irish Catholic Directory* (1936). A younger brother, Joseph J. MacSweeney (1892–1956), taught Old English grammar and the history of English sound-changes in the English Department of University College Dublin; cf. obituary notice in the *Report of the President of University College, Dublin* (1955–1956), 57–8. Seosamh's son, Paul O'Longan, HM Customs Examining Officer in Cork, is recorded in the 1901 Ireland census as residing at Ballintemple, Blackrock, with his wife, Elizabeth, and the couple's seven children; see <http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search/> (consulted October 2015). By 1911, the family had settled in Essex; see <http://www.ukcensusonline.com/census/1911.php> (consulted October 2015). One of this couple's children, Paul Charles Stacpoole O'Longan (b. 1897 or 1898), was a pilot of the 41st Squadron of the Royal Flying Corps who died in action on 1 June 1917 and is buried in Oosttaverne Wood Cemetery, Heuvelland, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium; see <http://www.irishmedals.org/some-irishen-kia-ww1.html> (consulted October 2015) and <https://billiongraves.com/grave/P-C-S-OLongan/21081898?referrer=myheritage> (consulted July 2017). An anthology of his poems, *Last post and other poems*, was published shortly before his death.<sup>109</sup> According to the records for St. Mary's Pro Cathedral, Marlborough Street, Dublin, Brigida Long, born on 16 November 1867, was baptised on 18 November 1867, with Johannes Broderick and Johanna Boyle as witnesses (National Library of Ireland microfilm pos. 9154). The records at Glasnevin Cemetery inform us that two O'Longan children of 24 North Summer Street are buried in the Garden Section (grave number GF 232): Norah, one day old, whose funeral was on 23 January 1872, and James Murray O'Longan, 'scriveners child', aged four months, who died of bronchitis on 14 December 1877 and was buried on 16 December 1877.

<sup>109</sup> According to the records for St. Mary's Pro Cathedral, Marlborough Street, Dublin, Brigida Long, born on 16 November 1867, was baptised on 18 November 1867, with Johannes Broderick and Johanna Boyle as witnesses (National Library of Ireland microfilm pos. 9154). The records at Glasnevin Cemetery inform us that two O'Longan children of 24 North Summer Street are buried in the Garden Section (grave number GF 232): Norah, one day old, whose funeral was on 23 January 1872, and James Murray O'Longan, 'scriveners child', aged four months, who died of bronchitis on 14 December 1877 and was buried on 16 December 1877.

I hope, Sir, that you will be so kind as to lay this letter before the next meeting of the Council, and to let me know the result at your earliest convenience, in order that if the Acad. will not buy them that I may have time to dispose of them elsewhere.

I am, dear Sir, yours very sincerely,  
Joseph Long.<sup>110</sup>

It seems unlikely that Ó Longáin was actually intent on moving to Australia, rather he probably hoped that in making his intensions public, the Royal Irish Academy might offer him a position instead as scribe. This was certainly the understanding of Academy scribe Owen Connellan (c.1797–1871) when writing to John Windele from ‘2 Clanbrassil Place, Dublin’ on 2 May 1863:

Have you any news about Mr Long — is he gone to Australia yet. The last time I saw him at the Academy in Dec. or Jan. last he told me his intention of going there, but at that time I thought he was only endeavouring to raise his price in the Academy market. He asked me before those in the Academy if I could make facsimiles of MSS. as he was then doing, and understanding well his object, I stated as loud as I could that there was no other man living who could do what he could. There was another point to be gained, and that was that I did not understand the language of ancient Irish MSS so well as he did, and he spent more than an hour in finding out a number of single words in different parts of the MS he was copying (Book of Lismore), and whenever I hesitated in giving the meaning of each word, at his query, there was a knowing look given at some of the listeners. I believe that had he known I was well up to the dodge, by having been often catechised by Curry in a similar manner, in the presence of his friends, he would not resort to that trick of low cunning. However, I helped him in gaining his point, and I wish him the full benefit of the Academy boys, for all I want from them is access to the MSS, which I apprehend they will not give.<sup>111</sup>

Conscious that Ó Longáin might be making a positive impression on the ‘Academy boys’ and others, Connellan’s increasing insecurity regarding his own reputation and position within the Academy is evident in the following caustic conclusion to a second letter to Windele, dated 26 December 1863:

Your Corkagian great scholar of the south, Joe Long, is speculating as clearly as he can at the RIA and every person within earshot that comes there must have been impressed ad nauseam that I am only a Bosthoun, but I fear my modesty and patience will be so overtaxed that I must break out into rebellion. He is going to Australia and he is not going. He thinks he will become a farmer or set up in business. If he could dispose of his MSS to the R.I.A. he would be off to some other part of the world. He has no copies of those he has for sale. He has made it known that some gentlemen in Cork are sending him to the continent to make copies of the MSS there, which will put the RIA out of the field if they do not employ him at once etc., etc., etc.  
Yours ever sincerely,

<sup>110</sup> RIA Council Minutes XIII, pp. 95–6.

<sup>111</sup> Windele Collection, RIA MS 4 B 23 / 33 (ii).

Owen Connellan.<sup>112</sup>

Seosamh Ó Longáin was eventually appointed ‘Irish scribe to the Academy’ in December 1865 on a yearly salary of a hundred pounds, and his potential as ‘the finest penman of the family’ was to truly emerge.<sup>113</sup> From 1 December 1877, his annual salary was increased by twenty-five pounds with any overtime for which he was to be paid not exceeding two hours daily — except on Saturdays when four hours’ overtime was allowed.<sup>114</sup> Among his duties, he produced facsimile transcripts of *Leabhar na hUidhre*, the *Leabhar Breac* and the Book of Leinster, and these were the basis of the lithographic reproductions of these manuscripts which the Academy published in the 1870s and 1880. The facsimile of *Leabhar na hUidhre* was met with unfavourable criticism by the renowned Celtic scholar Whitley Stokes (1830–1909), but the Irish-language revivalist Richard J. O’Duffy (d. 1934), in a brief account of Ó Longáin dated ‘Christmas 1919’, argued that the praise for the Academy scribe’s work far outweighed Stokes’ pedantry:

The enthusiasm with which Ó Longan’s work was received was not damped by this pedantic performance, but the unfairness of the line of criticism not unnaturally caused disquietude to Ó Longan, who, in the position he was placed, could only leave his vindication to his friends. And there were many.<sup>115</sup>

Our scribe did not live to see his copy of the Book of Leinster in print, a work that, according to its editor, Robert Atkinson (1839–1908), ‘was a labour of love that absorbed his life’.<sup>116</sup> He had barely begun transcribing the Book of Ballymote, in fact, when he died on 11 February 1880 and the Academy subsequently suspended work on a facsimile of this major medieval Irish manuscript.<sup>117</sup> He was buried in the Garden Section of Glasnevin cemetery — GF 232.5 today — although the grave itself is unmarked.

The lot of the third generation of Ó Longáin scribes 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. While 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, as we have seen, were both employed as official scribes for the Royal Irish Academy, and Seosamh’s son Mícheál, *alias* Michael, was also employed by the Academy. On 21 March 1874, for example, Seosamh addressed the following letter on behalf of his son ‘To the Librarian’, Robert Atkinson:

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

<sup>112</sup> Windele Collection, RIA MS 4 B 23 / 101 (v).

<sup>113</sup> RIA Council Minutes XIII, p. 414; O’Neill, *The Irish hand*, 72.

<sup>114</sup> RIA Council Minutes XVIII, p. 416.

<sup>115</sup> NLI MS G 566, p. 17; cf. Ní Úrdail, *The scribe in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland*, 131.

<sup>116</sup> Atkinson, *The Book of Leinster*, 15.

<sup>117</sup> NLI MS G 566, p. 29; RIA Council Minutes XIX, p. 349, p. 351.

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>118</sup>

Mícheál son of Seosamh began his employment as Academy scribe on 25 March 1874 on the weekly salary of fifteen shillings requested above. Having been employed by the Academy for a subsequent fifteen months, he applied for a leave of absence on 5 July 1875 and although a fortnight's leave was granted, this was not to be 'considered a precedent'.<sup>119</sup> He received a premium of twenty-five pounds from the Cunningham Fund in November 1875 in recognition of 'the laborious nature' of his duties and 'the amount of time devoted to the work'.<sup>120</sup> Incidentally, given that he died in 1877, he is unlikely 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>121</sup>

There is a certain irony, as Timothy O'Neill has pointed out, in the fact that Seosamh Ó Longáin, the last of the hereditary scribes, died while working to have his pen work mechanically reproduced by lithography.<sup>122</sup> That is true, but 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. Another instance is Pól Ó Longáin's text of *Gáirdín an Anma*, lithographically reproduced in 1844 by Timothy (O')Callaghan whose business was at 45 South Mall, Cork.<sup>123</sup> In its title-page, Ó Longáin's term for lithography, *clochbhualadh* ('stone-printing'), neatly captures this process of printing from a stone, while *clochghrafadóir* is his calque on lithographer (< Greek *lithos* 'stone' and *gráphos* 'writer').<sup>124</sup>

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In light of the foregoing, the Irish scribal 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. It is tempting to ask, of course, whether the tradition of learning inherited by Mícheál Óg would have passed on to two subsequent generations had he followed through on his plan to emigrate to America early in the year 1795. The present writer likes to think that it would, given that some Irish exiles continued to preserve Ireland's native literary

<sup>118</sup> RIA Rough Minutes I (1836–1884).

<sup>119</sup> RIA Rough Minutes I (1836–1884); RIA Council Minutes XVII, pp. 391–2.

<sup>120</sup> RIA Council Minutes XVII, pp. 407–8. For the Cunningham Fund, founded in memory of Timothy Cunningham (d. 1789), who left £1,000 to the Academy, see Ó Raifeartaigh, *The Royal Irish Academy: a bicentennial history*, 16–18, 71–3, 89, 321.

<sup>121</sup> de hÍde, *Mise agus an Connradh*, 33; on the death of Mícheál son of Seosamh Ó Longáin, see Pádraig Ó Macháin's paper in the present volume.

<sup>122</sup> O'Neill, *The Irish hand*, 72.

<sup>123</sup> Slater, *Royal national commercial directory of Ireland*, 52, 74; Fulton, *The city of Cork directory*, 19, 228, 247; Guy, *County and city of Cork directory for the years 1875–1876*, 581, 628; cf. Buckley, 'Timothy O'Callaghan, a Cork lithographer', 54.

<sup>124</sup> Copies of the original lithographic reproduction of *Gáirdín an Anma* may be consulted today in the National Library of Ireland and elsewhere. I am very grateful to Pádraig Ó Riain, Emeritus Professor of Early and Medieval Irish, University College Cork, for permission to reproduce the work's frontispiece and title-page here from a copy in his private possession.

heritage in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by setting about writing manuscripts in their new home.<sup>125</sup> Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that Mícheál Óg would not have indulged his love of learning by continuing to write in exile and pass on the literary richness of his beloved language to the family's next generation in order to keep it alive and permanent (*ar bun agus ar buaintseasamh*). Be that as it may, living as an exiled scholar did not come to pass for him, and Irish-language scholarship is truly the richer for his contribution and that of the entire Ó Longáin family of scribes.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Ó Sé, 'Pádraig Feiritéar (1856–1924): a shaol agus a shaothar', 125, 127; Ó hÓgáin, 'Scríobhaithe lámhscríbhinní Gaeilge i gCill Chainnigh 1700–1870', 411–12; Ó Macháin, 'Fr Séamas Ó Muireadhaigh OP (c.1703–1767)', 111–13.

<sup>126</sup> I am very grateful to Professor Pádraig Ó Macháin, Siobhán Fitzpatrick and Lynn Brady (Glasnevin Cemetery) for help and advice on various aspects of this paper.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AIHS	American Irish Historical Society
Galway	James Hardiman Library, National University of Ireland Galway
Manchester	John Rylands University Library, Manchester
Maynooth	National University of Ireland Maynooth
NAI	National Archives of Ireland
NLI	National Library of Ireland
RIA	Royal Irish Academy
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UCD	University College Dublin

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