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MICHAEL J. MURPHY

(1913-1996)

Scríbhneoir, Bailitheoir, Grianghrafadóir

Mountain of Mystery;
Of Fionn the brave;
Of Saint-scholared Gael;
Of legend and tale–
I am your slave.

'Slieve Gullion' (*At Slieve Gullion's Foot*, 1940)

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An Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta
Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
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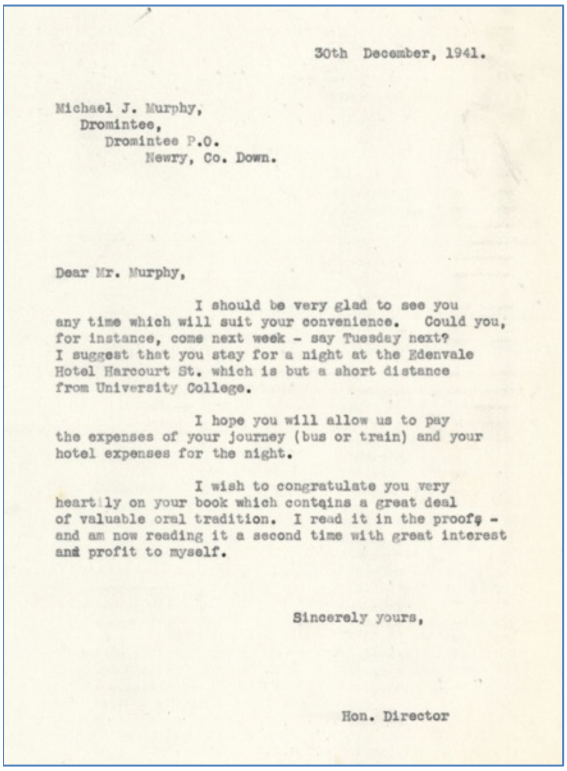
Rugadh Michael Joseph Murphy i Learpholl Shasana in 1913, mac le Michael agus Mary Murphy ar de bhunadh Dhromainn Tí, deisceart Ard Mhacha, iad ó dhúchas. Is uathusan a chuala sé na chéad scéalta. Fuair athair Michael – 'Micky Buck' – a chuid scéalta óna sheanathair féin, William Jordan as Taobh Crom sa cheantar céanna, scríobhaí Gaeilge agus mionfhile. Chaith Michael na blianta tosaigh thall agus d'fhill siad ar ais go hÉirinn agus é in aois a hocht mbliana d'aois.

Tógadh é thart ar cheantar Dhromainn Tí agus Sliabh gCuillinn i raon a chuid súl. D'fhág a thógáil agus a shaol mar oibrí feirme, agus an sliabh féin gan amhras, rian ar a dhearcadh saoil. Tá an méid sin le brath sa chéad leabhar a tháinig óna pheann, *At Slieve Gullion's Foot* (1940). Deir sé sa réamhrá:

> *For it is essentially a simple life in the valleys among the hills of Slieve Gullion. It carries a heritage; mountains give one a certain standard which governs one's whole outlook. They take a grip on the heart as one grows and always leave one with what the people say, "a grah" for it for ever. And now come with me to a house on the eastern slope of Slieve Gullion ... it was in this house that these chapters really began; and it was at this house that I really became a man of the mountains.* (Murphy 1940: réamhrá)

Michael J. Murphy ina shuí ar an Dá Fhiacail Mhóra agus Sliabh gCuillinn ar a chúl (1963). CBÉG F008.25.00003

Sa leabhar sin faightear an-léargas ar nósanna agus ar thraidisiúin an phobail ag bun an tsléibhe seo. Tá an clúdach féin maisithe le grianghraf de pháistí in éineacht le corránaí agus 'cailleach', nó an punann deireanach a bhaintear san fhómhar, ina lámh acu agus Sliabh gCuillinn ar a gcúl. Ba é an leabhar seo a tharraing aird Shéamuis Uí Dhuilearga, Stiúrthóir Oinigh Choimisiún Béaloideasa Éireann, agus a spreag é le cuireadh a thabhairt dó teacht ar fhoireann an Choimisiúin go lánaimseartha in 1949.



30th December, 1941.

Michael J. Murphy,
Dromintee,
Dromintee P.O.
Newry, Co. Down.

Dear Mr. Murphy,

I should be very glad to see you any time which will suit your convenience. Could you, for instance, come next week - say Tuesday next? I suggest that you stay for a night at the Edenvale Hotel Harcourt St. which is but a short distance from University College.

I hope you will allow us to pay the expenses of your journey (bus or train) and your hotel expenses for the night.

I wish to congratulate you very heartily on your book which contains a great deal of valuable oral tradition. I read it in the proofs - and am now reading it a second time with great interest and profit to myself.

Sincerely yours,

Hon. Director

Ón am sin go ndeachaigh sé ar scor in 1983, bhí Michael i mbun bhailiú an bhéaloidis ar fud 'sean-Uladh' – mar a thugann sé féin air sa réamhrá le *Now You're Talking...* (1975) – ó Reachlainn, Co. Aontroma go Co. Lú. Cé gur in oirthear Uladh agus i dtuaisceart Laighean a shaothraigh sé den chuid is mó, bhailigh sé ábhar in iarthar na cúige (taobh amuigh de Dhún na nGall) agus sna contaetha buailte léi i dtuaisceart Chonnacht chomh maith. Ní gan dua a thug sé faoin chúram mar is léir ón réamhrá chéanna:

The quest itself and the occupation of folklore collecting were strange, and suspicions had to be allayed: people tended to suspect the collector of all kinds of secret missions – a Government agent keeping an eye on valid and invalid subsidies of one kind or another, a clerk who had absconded with the till, a schoolmaster hounded from his school, even a revolutionary on the run! (Murphy 1975: vii)

Lena linn leis an Choimisiún, agus le Roinn Bhéaloideas Éireann ó 1971 ar aghaidh, bhailigh sé 250 imleabhar ceangailte, nó breis agus 30,000 leathanach clóite atá mar chuid de Chnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann anois. I measc an ábhair seo, tá tras-scríbhinní d'agallaimh, nótaí agus sleachta as a chuid dialann. Ó 1962 i leith bhí gléas taifeadta in úsáid aige agus maireann taifeadtaí fuaime dá chuid agallamh, thart ar 340 spól cúig orlach agus seacht n-orlach.

Murab ionann is roinnt de na bailitheoirí eile, bhíodh ceamara ag Michael J. Murphy agus é ar a shiúlta. Thógadh sé grianghraif de na scéalaithe agus den saol inar mhair siad agus is acmhainn thar a bheith luachmhar an taifead fisiúil seo a chuireann go mór lena bhailiúchán scríofa. Is iomaí gnúis a ghabh sé cé nach raibh gach duine sásta go mbeadh grianghraf ann dóibh – dhiúltaigh scéalaí amháin as Cluain Daimh, Co. an Dúin, ar fhaitíos go mbainfí mí-úsáid as an íomhá i gcúrsaí asarlaíochta le dochar a dhéanamh dó (Murphy 1975: 151).

Mar sin féin bhí formhór na ndaoine sásta go dtógfadh sé grianghraif díobh agus is mór an gar sin. Thaitin sé leis a bheith i measc na ndaoine, *'It is a treat and a delight to converse with the old people. Their sincerity is genuine and infectious and does one good'* (Murphy 1940: 9). Bíonn nótaí spéisiúla faoi na daoine seo ar bhailigh sé ábhar uathu ina lámhscríbhinní i gCnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann. Cé nach raibh an Ghaeilge ina teanga phobail a thuilleadh i ndeisceart Ard Mhacha agus Michael i mbun cnuasaigh, bhí corrdhuine fós ann agus an teanga ar a dtoil acu, agus is ríshoiléir óna scribhinní an meas a bhí aige orthu. Ag trácht ar Mary Nugent, Achadh an Dá Mhaol, Co. Ard Mhacha, duine de na cainteoirí dúchais deireanacha Gaeilge sa cheantar, deir sé in 1948:

Mary Nugent agus a gariníon, Achadh an Dá Mhaol, Co. Ard Mhacha (c.1948). CBÉG [M004.25.00033]

Here I would like to record my regret that I do not know Irish because Mary Nugent broke into Gaelic and spoke it for about five minutes. I sat truly entranced, listening to it sing off her lips, not knowing a word, but feeling moved in a new and even proud way. She often and very naturally breaks into a word or phrase or two of Irish, not aware that she has done so. This happens unusually when her emotions are stirred, either humorously or otherwise. (CBÉ 1113: 422)

Bhí sé de dhualgas ar bhailitheoirí lánaimseartha Choimisiún Béaloideasa Éireann dialann a choinneáil chun eolas comhthéacsúil faoi na seisiúin taifeadta, na faisnéiseoirí, agus faoin obair i gcoitinne a bhreacadh. Is iomaí cur síos breá a thugann Michael J. ina dhialanna agus faightear an-léargas ar an chaidreamh a bhí aige lena fhaisnéiseoirí agus ar a nádúr féin. Duine díobh siúd a luaitear go minic is ea Frank 'Wings' Campbell. Ag scríobh dó ar an 26 Bealtaine, 1969, deir Murphy:

> *Poor Frank Campbell (he was 75 on Saturday last he says) visibly wizening. He is a genial old fellow, loves the crack, loves to "get stuck into an argument" and drinks bottles of stout. He wanted to tell me about donkeys, a tradition he had remembered. From this we went on to other items I'd heard him mention; and in addition got some anecdotal tales, earthy as cow-dung....* (CBÉ 1749: 112)

Dé Domhnaigh an 29 Meitheamh, 1969, bhuail Murphy isteach tigh Larkin i bhFoirceal - *No pubs officially or legally open here on Sunday, but that doesn't seem to matter*, ar sé. Ar dhul isteach dó bhí Frank os a chomhair agus chuaigh siad i mbun taifeadta.

> *So Frank was there, and at once:*
> *"I say, Mickey: there's a thing come into my head the other day…"*
> *And we're off again. And after twenty minutes or half an hour Frank will lean back, erect while holding his stick on the floor, and laugh:*
> *"The divil took the house since you come in. How the hell is it you always rise some great crack between us."*
> *More often Frank rises it himself!* (CBÉ 1749: 126-7)

Nuair a bhí an dreas comhrá istigh agus Michael J. ar tí bailiú leis, dúirt Frank leis gan a bheith chomh fada sin amuigh arís gan teacht chuige an chéad uair eile.

Fuair Michael J. bás ar an 18 Bealtaine 1996. Ar lá a thórraimh chuimhnigh Bo Almqvist, Ollamh le Béaloideas Éireann i gColáiste na hOllscoile Baile Átha Cliath, ar fhocail a dúirt Michael leis uair amháin faoi na daoine a mbailíodh sé ábhar uathu: '"*It is a pity that people like them will ever have to die. But still," he continued, "they will not die - their tales and traditions are preserved and will live on to the pleasure and profit of future generations*"' (Almqvist 1996–7: 365). Is fíor an méid sin, a bhuí le Michael J. Murphy, fear sléibhe.

Sa taispeántas seo déantar comóradh ar an mbailitheoir agus táthar ag iarraidh aird a tharraingt ar a chuid iarrachtaí le taifead físiúil de na daoine agus de na nósanna a casadh leis a chaomhnú, taifead a chuireann go mór lena chuid scríbhinní. Thiomsaigh Murphy timpeall is 1,300 claonchló meán- agus mórfhormáid le linn a chuid obair pháirce. Tógadh an tríú cuid díobh in Ard Mhacha, a chontae dúchais, agus tá sciar maith díobh siúd digitithe agus curtha ar fáil anois ar www.duchas.ie.

Tagairtí

CBÉ = An Príomhbhailiúchán Lámhscribhínní, Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann, UCD. (www.duchas.ie)

CBÉG = An Bailiúchán Grianghraf, Cnuasach Bhéaloideas Éireann, UCD. (www.duchas.ie)

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Fig. 1. Radharc ar Dhromainn Tí i dtreo an oirdheiscirt. (Bealtaine 1966). CBÉG

A001.25.00007

Fig. 2. Pictiúr de Michael J. Murphy lasmuigh de theach 'Ketty Bucks' ar Bhóthar Sléibhe Dhromainn Tí (nó Bóthar Sléibhe Shliabh gCuillinn), áit a raibh cónaí air ó 1946-1948. (Iúil, 1963). CBÉG A015.25.00057

Fig. 3. Ag burláil féir ar thalamh Patrick O'Hare, Áth na hÁithe (1966). CBÉG B028.25.00015

Fig. 4. Stephen Corney as Doire na Rua, Dromainn Tí ag spraeáil prátaí. Sliabh gCuillinn sa chúlra (Iúil 1965). CBÉG B024.25.00008

Fig. 5. Stephen Corney agus a mhac, Dromainn Tí (Iúil 1965). CBÉG B024.25.00005

Fig. 6. Micky Kelly (thart ar 67 bliana d’aois) saothraí; Dromainn Tí (Deireadh Fómhair 1965).

CBÉG M004.25.00034

Fig. 7. Barney Loche agus Micky Kelly, Dromainn Tí (Deireadh Fómhair 1965). CBÉG M004.25.00006

Fig. 8. Mary Alice Morgan agus a fear céile Arthur Morgan (94 bliana d'aois), Carraig Bhrádach (Meitheamh 1969). CBÉG M004.25.00044

"Was last night with old Arthur Morgan of Ballinamona, Carrickbroad… Just on his birthday too as it happened: he is 94. And I had a wee jorum of stout with me. In very good form, but the memory fading and the hearing also. His wife, Mary Alice, looking remarkably fit and young: these were always a very fine couple… Listening to Arthur record a few fairy tales… am struck more forcibly than ever of the true wonder in these accounts: the incident, the people, the telling." (CBÉ 1748: 36-38)

Fig. 9. Geata dúbailte adhmaid déanta ag teach Owen Quinn, Carraig Bhrádach, Dromainn Tí (Meán Fómhair 1962). CBÉG A043.25.00005

Fig. 10. An ceann tuí deireanach i nDromainn Tí [1965] ag teach Mickey Kelly. Thugtaí Teach Anne Corney ar an áit sa chomharsanacht – máthair Kelly ab ea Anne (Aibreán 1965). CBÉG A015.25.00012

Fig. 11. Larry McAllister lasmuigh dá theach, An Feadán Uachtarach (Aibreán 1964). CBÉG A015.25.00003

"Larry McAllister… A free enough soul, and I have always had a crack with him and tried to get what lore he could remember… His father was a good storyteller, the man from whom the late Dan Rooney of Lurgancanty here in Co. Down learned many tales and traditions." (CBÉ 1698: 26)

Fig. 12. Cró caorach ar thalamh Larry McAllister, An Feadán Uachtarach (Aibreán 1964).

CBÉG B024.25.00001

B028.25.00004

Fig. 13. Cruacha coirce á ndéanamh ar thalamh Peter Toal. Tugtar 'atucks' (ón bhfocal Gaeilge 'adóg') orthu sa chomharsanacht, Dromainn Tí (Deireadh Fómhair 1965). CBÉG B028.25.00004

Fig. 14. Páistí scoile i mBéal Leice ag súgradh ar an spás idir an scoil agus an bóthar (Bealtaine 1965). CBÉG E004.25.00002

Fig. 15. 'Babs' Haughey, a ritheann a muintir teach tábhairne Larkin i bhFoirceal (Aibreán 1969). CBÉG M004.25.00005

Fig. 16. Barney Shortt, Michael J. Murphy agus Frank 'Wings' Campbell lasmuigh de theach tábhairne Larkin i bhFoirceal (Aibreán 1969). CBÉG M004.25.00014

Fig. 17. Frank 'Wings' Campbell, Foirceal, An tIúr (Meitheamh 1963). CBÉG M004.25.00017

"I say, Mickey: there's a thing come into me head the other day… And we're off again. And after twenty minutes or half an hour Frank will lean back, erect while holding his stick on the floor, and laugh: 'The divil took the house since you come in. How the hell is it you always rise some great crack between us.' More often Frank rises it himself!" (CBÉ 1749: 127)

Fig. 18. Michael 'The Milestone' Quinn, Ballinamaddy, Dromainn Tí. Fear aitheanta sa chomharsanacht a bhfuil tagairtí dó i dtaifid agus i ndialanna Michael J. Murphy. Cuireadh 'The Milestone' air toisc gurb é 'The Milestone' an t-ainm a bhí ar theach tábhairne Quinn san Iúr. Cailleadh é Mí an Mhárta 1966, agus cuireadh i reilig Dhromainn Tí é (1965). CBÉG M004.25.00057

Fig. 19. Michael 'The Milestone' Quinn, i bhfeighil a chuid eallaigh i gCarraig Bhrádach (1965). CBÉG M004.25.00063

Fig. 20. Grianghraf glactha ag Ellen Ettlinger de Michael J. Murphy, a bhean chéile Alice agus a gclann mhac. Tá a mhac, Michael, ina bhaclainn ag Michael J. agus tá Patrick ina shuí ar chloch ar thaobh an dorais, gné chomónta ar thithe ag an am (Feabhra 1947). CBÉG [M004.25.00068]