

ἸΑΝ Αἰῆμ



o'rathaille's GRAVE

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Introduction

By the end of the 17th century, the province of Munster in South-West Ireland had been devastated by successive wars - the Desmond Rebellions of 1569-73 and 1579-83; the first Munster Plantation in 1586; the second Munster Plantation in 1603; the Nine Years War from 1594 to 1603 and by the Cromwell campaign of 1649 to 1652.

It was into this war-torn landscape in the village of Screathan an Mhil (Scrahanaveal) that Aodhagán O'Rathaille was born in 1670. His father died when Aodhagán was still young leaving his mother in good circumstances. Under the stress of the situation, his mother relinquished their property and they then moved to Cnoc an Chorrhíaidh (Stagmount) where Aodhagán lived for a considerable time under the chieftom of the MacCarthys. It was likely here that Aodhagán was trained in the bardic arts. Despite acquiring an excellent education in the bardic school of the Egan family (ollamhs¹ to the MacCarthy Mórs) and being widely recognised as one of the elite ollamhs of his time, Aodhagán lived through a time of major political and social upheaval in Ireland which was ultimately to result in the abandonment of the Irish language and the death of the bardic tradition which had been the repository of the music, history and poetry of the native Irish for centuries. The changes in Irish society directly impacted Aodhagán O'Rathaille's life and resulted in his social status being reduced from that of a respected ollamh to a destitute pauper. This horrendous transition (a microcosm of the wider social changes happening throughout the country) was a source of huge bitterness to Aodhagán and it was this pathos that drove him to pen much of his poetry.

This album explores the life of Aodhagán O'Rathaille through his own poetry and through a mixture of traditional and modern Irish and Scottish music.

¹ In Irish Ollam or Ollamh (anglicised Ollave or Ollav), is a master in a particular trade or skill. In early Irish Literature it generally refers to the highest rank of Fili. A fili was a member of an elite class of poets in Ireland, up into the Renaissance, when the Irish class system was dismantled.

1. Learning The Trade - *Slip Jig* – The Exiles Jig

The traditional method of education in Ireland in the 16th and 17th century was oral i.e. knowledge was passed on through spoken instruction rather than written records. Books and writing materials were scarce and the enactment of the penal laws in 1695 which forbade Catholics to teach or manage schools in Ireland resulted in the creation of illegal “hedge schools”, where traveling masters would teach in secret.

The Exile’s Jig illustrates the concept of oral (aural) learning – the fiddle sets the pace which is followed by the flute giving rise to a circular tune which progresses in style and speed. Aodhagán O’Rathaille would certainly have been educated in the oral tradition although he would have learned the skills of an ollamh through written material also and it is possible that he taught in hedge schools later in his life.

This slip-jig has been accredited to Johnny Moynihan of the band Sweeney’s Men, however it may be a traditional tune.

2. The Barn Dance – *Hornpipes* - *Pride of Petravore* / *The Devil’s Dream* / *The Cuckoo’s Nest*

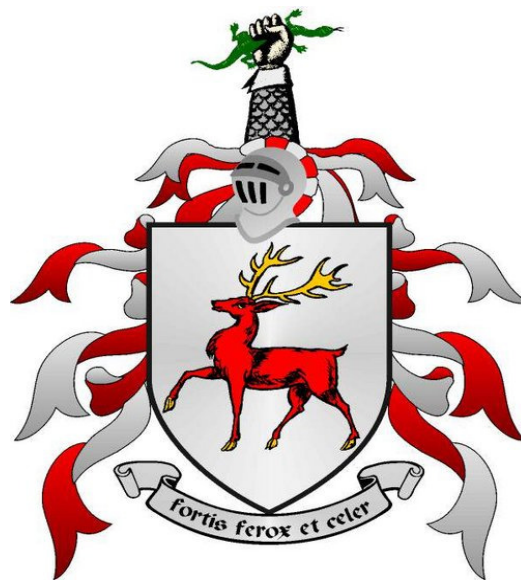
There is little doubt that dancing existed among the Irish population throughout its history, but it was not until the plantation of English and Scottish settlers in Ireland during the 16th and 17th centuries that the formal and specific arrangements of the dances were recorded. The jig, reel and hornpipe were the first rhythms used for Quadrilles – the main type of dances at the great houses of the military aristocracy in Ireland. After Oliver Cromwell’s campaign in Ireland, many English settlers were granted large tracts of land on which they settled. On occasion, traveling dance masters would come from England to teach the household the latest fashionable dances from Europe. These dance masters, if not fiddlers themselves, were usually attended by a fiddler to provide music for their lessons. However, because the members of the household had to rely on their own resources when the dance master moved on, they quickly acquired fiddles and provided their own music. As the fiddles aged and were replaced, they were passed down to the peasants who worked in the households. In this manner, the dance tradition spread through the native population giving rise to native dance masters who traveled throughout the country from cabin to cabin where they were paid by cottiers to teach their children dancing. In Kerry, it was not uncommon to hold the dancing school in conjunction with a hedge school.

This set of hornpipes came from England and Scotland and are typical of the type of hornpipes that would have been danced to by the aristocracy in the great houses and by peasants in the countryside.

3. Patronised – *Waltzes* – O’Connell’s Lamentation / O’Carolan’s Welcome

Aodhagán O’ Rathaille was related to the brehons to the MacCarthy Mór family and would have seen them as his chiefs and patrons. Due to the Munster plantation however, the Browne family (later known as Kenmare) had succeeded to the MacCarthy lands under English occupation. Unlike most of the English settlers, the Brownes soon reverted to their old Catholic faith and made matches with the leading Catholic families in Munster and Leinster - O Sullivan Mór, Fitzgerald of Desmond, MacCarthy, Butlers, O'Briens, Plunketts and many others.

Sir Valentine Browne, 3rd Baronet (1638–1694) was a supporter of James II, King of England and was given the title Viscount Kenmare by James. He was the landlord and patron of Aodhagán O’Rathaille. However, after the fall of James in 1691, Valentine Browne became attainted for his association with James and his estates were made forfeit in 1691. His son Nicholas Browne, 4th Baronet, 2nd Viscount was also a Jacobite supporter and therefore also attainted and could not claim the estates. His children were still to inherit though, so the commissioners of the estate were instructed not to let the estate for more than 21 years. However, it was let to John Blennerhasset and George Rogers (two members of parliament) for a contract of 61 years. Attempting to retain the estate and curry favour, Blennerhasset and Rogers claimed they planned to plant the estate with Protestants when their illegal contract was questioned by the English Commission in 1699. However, the contract was quashed and in 1703 the estate was sold to John Asgill who had married a daughter of Nicholas Browne. Under his management, two ruthless and greed driven men, Timothy Cronin and Murtagh Griffin extorted hearth money from tenants and felled the woods for quick profit (Aodhagán composed a vitriol ridden satire upon the death of Griffin and another in “honour” of Cronin). It wasn’t until the death of Nicholas Browne in 1720, that the estates were again placed under the ownership of a Browne – Nicholas’ son Valentine, 5th Baronet, 3rd Viscount.



The two tunes here are in 3/4 (waltz) time and represent the patronisation of O'Rathaille by the MacCarthy Mór family. The first is a beautiful traditional waltz in three parts. The second was composed by the legendary bard Turloch Ó Carolan who was also born in 1670.

4. Dance At The Manor (Part 1) – *Slip Jig and Jig - Kid on the Mountain / Whelan's Jig*

In the earlier years of his life, Aodhagán would have performed at gatherings in the great houses such as the O'Callaghan's (as he refers to in an epic poem composed upon the death of O'Callaghan). He had the social status of an ollamh and would have been welcome and respected in any of the great houses of the Irish or old English nobility.

The two tunes comprising this set are common dance tunes. The first is a five part slip jig. The second is a two part double jig commonly known as Whelan's Jig or the Rookery.

5. The Dance At The Manor (Part 2) - *Reels - The Limestone Rock / The Otter's Holt / The Longford Tinker*

This set of reels begins with The Limestone Rock – a two part reel, unusual in that each part is played only once. It is thought that the title refers to the limestone rocks of the area of County Clare called the Burren.

The second tune is a two part reel credited to the late Clare fiddler Martin 'Junior' Crehan. This precedes the three part reel, The Longford Tinker, which is a clear variation of the Scottish reel, Jenny Dang The Weaver.

6. The Battle of The Boyne 1690 - *Air and Lament - Boyne Water / Caoineadh Eoghain Rua*

James II, a Catholic since 1669, succeeded his brother Charles II as king of England, Ireland and Scotland in 1685. Leading subjects who were suspicious of his religious policies and hostile to any change of the existing political arrangement, engineered his overthrow in the revolution of 1688 (often referred to as the Glorious Revolution). William III, prince of Orange and husband of James's protestant daughter Mary, was placed on the throne as joint sovereign with Mary. In England, the revolution was largely bloodless as James fled to France following William's landing. James was sent to Ireland by Louis XIV of France (who was keen to use him against William) whereupon the country divided into those who supported James (Jacobites) and those who supported William (Williamites) and the Williamite War (1689 – 91) began. William's main concern was the defense of the Dutch Republic from France and it was the fear that

James was turning England into a French satellite that had led him to intervene there in 1688. Now that James was in Ireland with French support, William reluctantly came to Ireland in 1690 to take personal charge of the army. The Battle of the Boyne was only one of a series of battles that took place during the Williamite War and was not very important in terms of the overall outcome of the war. However, it is historically significant due to the fact that both James and William were present on the battlefield. James' retreat from the battlefield and in fact from Ireland after the battle earned him a reputation as a coward.

William had no real interest in Ireland and soon returned to the continental war that remained his first priority. Personally tolerant, and unwilling to offend Catholic allies, he initially blocked proposed penal laws, but gave way to Irish Protestant pressure in the parliament. The creation of the Orange Order in 1795 led to the appropriation of Williamite celebration - with anti-Catholicism displacing the defeat of James II as the central theme.

The air *Boyne Water* is at least 300 years old and has been used as a vehicle for numerous songs (As *Vanquished Erin*, *Native Swords*, *When the King Came O'er the Boyne* and *Rosc Catha Na Mumhan* to name a few) of both loyalist and nationalist persuasions. Its driving rhythm effectively describes the clash of marching armies. In the aftermath however, the strains of *Caoineadh Eoghain Rua* (*Lament for Red Owen*) mourns the dead and the subsequent loss of Irish culture which was to follow this political war. The most likely namesake of the lament is Owen Roe O'Neill, nephew of "the Great O'Neill" and one of the generals of the Irish during the Confederate War (1641-53).

7. The Galloglasses – *Strathspey and Marches* - *Tha Mi Sgith / Zennor's Tor / Mrs Martha Knowles*

The term Galloglas is an Anglicisation of the Irish, *Gallóglaigh* ("foreign soldiers"). The galloglasses were a mercenary warrior elite among Gaelic-Norse clans residing in the highlands and Western Isles of Scotland from the mid 13th century to the end of the 16th century. Compared to the native Irish warrior, the Galloglas was heavily armed and armoured and therefore more suited to fight against the mounted English knights. In return for military service, galloglas contingents were given land and settled in Irish lordships, where they were entitled to receive supplies from the local population.

Though the Galloglas ceased as a military unit in the 17th century, their family names (e.g. *MacSweeney*, *MacDonnell*, *MacCabe*) live on to this day - often concentrated in areas where their ancestors were settled in the service of Irish lordships.

The social and cultural relationship between the Scottish and Irish in the middle ages cannot be doubted and is shown clearly in the traditional music of both countries. As *Brendan Breathnach* states in his book *Folk Music and Dances of Ireland*, "A very strong case can be made for ascribing a Scots ancestry to our reels".

This set of tunes gives the impression of the battles and skirmishes which were being fought throughout Ireland during the Williamite War and the involvement of Scotsmen in the fighting. The first tune in this set (Tha Mi Sgith – I Am Weary) is a Strathspey - a tune type that originated in the area surrounding the River Spey in Scotland. The second tune is a march with a Scottish feel composed by a member of Gan Ainm. Following this is a march composed by the legendary Scottish accordion player Phil Cunningham. It was written in honour of his grandmother.

8. The Battle of Aughrim 1691 – *Lament* - The Battle of Aughrim

The Battle of Aughrim was the decisive battle of the Williamite War and was much more strategically significant than the Battle of The Boyne. It was fought on the 12th of July 1691, near the village of Aughrim in County Galway.

The battle was the bloodiest ever fought on Irish soil – over 7,000 people were killed. Notable figures in the battle were the French general Charles Chalmont (the Marquis de Saint-Ruth) who had taken over as commander of the Jacobites from Richard Talbot (1st Earl of Tyrconnel) after the defeat at the Boyne. In command of the Jacobite Cavalry was Patrick Sarsfield – an experienced soldier and Jacobite who was very close to James II. The Williamite troops were led by Godert de Ginkell, a Dutch general who had recently taken Athlone due to Saint-Ruth's failure to mobilise troops swiftly enough. Galled by this failure, Saint-Ruth chose a strong position near Aughrim and waited for Ginkell's force to arrive. His plan was to lure the Williamites into a treacherous bog in front of his line. At first these tactics appeared to be successful - thick mist enveloped Ginkell's army as it moved out; and many soldiers were drawn into the bog, cut off and slaughtered, while the Jacobites took a battery of Williamite guns. Confident of victory, Saint-Ruth attempted to rally his troops for a push forward, but incredibly a cannon ball, fired at extreme range, took off his head. As Williamite cavalry made a flanking assault over a narrow stretch of dry ground, a force of Jacobite horse under Henry Luttrell withdrew instead of counter attacking. Henry Luttrell was alleged to have been in the pay of the Williamites and was assassinated in Dublin after the war. The Jacobite position now collapsed very quickly. The cavalry near Saint-Ruth fled the field leaving the flank open. Those near Sarsfield, seeing the retreat, also began to leave the field though Sarsfield did try to organize a rearguard action. This left the infantry completely exposed and they were surrounded and slaughtered. Aughrim was the decisive battle of the Williamite war in Ireland. The city of Galway surrendered without a fight after the battle and the Jacobite's main army surrendered shortly afterwards at Limerick after a short siege. Sarsfield arranged the Treaty of Limerick and sailed to France on 22 December 1691, with many of his countrymen who entered the French service in what is known as the Flight of the Wild Geese. The Treaty of Limerick was seen at the time as a good result for the Jacobites as it protected the rights of those Jacobites who chose to remain in Ireland. However, the flight of the wild geese spelled the end of the Irish and Old English aristocracy and the introduction of the penal laws in 1695 effectively broke the sentiments of the treaty and worsened the plight of Irish Catholics.

The beautiful slow reel - The Battle of Aughrim - laments the slaughter which took place at Aughrim and the subsequent oppression of the native Irish.



9. Dispossessed – *Poem and Reels* - On His Removing to Duibhneacha, beside Tonn Tóime in Kerry / The Destitution / The Ruined Cottage in the Glen

Sir Valentine Browne, 3rd Baronet (1638–1694) was a supporter of James II and was given the title Viscount Kenmare by James. After the fall of James in 1691, Valentine Browne became attainted for his association with James and his estates were made forfeit in 1691. His son Nicholas Browne, 4th Baronet, 2nd Viscount was also a Jacobite supporter and therefore also attainted and could not claim the estates. O’Rathaille, in consequence, had to leave his native district and lived in poor circumstances at Tonn Tóime, at the edge of Castlemaine Harbour, some twelve miles west of Killarney.

The poem composed by O’Rathaille after his dispossession and relocation to Tonn Tóime is full of anger and self-pity. He bewails the loss of his stature as an ollamh and the events that were causing the collapse of the native Irish culture.

The slow reel, The Destitution, has been attributed to Ian Stevenson but is clearly a variation of the traditional tune Snow on the Hills. Following this is the aptly named Ruined Old Cottage in the Glen which is unusual in that the first part is half the length of the second.



On his Removing to Duibhneacha Beside Tonn Tóime in Kerry

The drenching night seems long to me, without sleep, without snore,
Without stock, or wealth, or sheep, or horned cows;
The storm on the waves beside me has harrowed my head,
And I was unused in my childhood to dogfish and periwinkles!

If the protecting prince from the bank of the Laune were alive,
And the company who shared with him (and would pity my plight),
Ruling over the fair, sheltered regions, rich in havens and harbours,
My children would not long remain in poverty in the land of Duibhnigh.

The great, valiant MacCarthy, to whom baseness was hateful,
And MacCarthy from the Lee, enfeebled, captive without release,
MacCarthy, prince of Kanturk, with his children in the grave –
Bitter grief courses through my heart that no trace of them is left.

My heart has withered within my breast, my humours soured,
Because the warriors that were not found niggardly, and who inherited the land
From Cashel to the waves of Cliodhna and across to Thomond,
Have their dwellings and possessions ravaged by foreign hosts.

You! Wave below!, of highest repute, loud-voiced,
The senses of my head are overcome with your bellowing,
Were aid ever to come to fair Erin again,
I would thrust your discordant clamour down your throat!

10. To Viscount Kenmare – *Poem and Dro* - Valentine Brown / Dans En Dro

Valentine Browne (5th Baronet, 3rd Viscount) took possession of the Kenmare estate upon the death of Nicholas Browne in 1720. Having been destitute for so long, (even composing a poem on his gratitude at receiving the gift of a pair of shoes), Aodhagán no doubt hoped that the return of a Browne to the lordship of the estate would mean a restoration of his status as ollamh and celebrated Valentine's marriage to Honora Butler in 1720 in an Epithalamium. However, society had changed vastly in the intervening time and the estates had suffered under the mismanagement of John Asgill and were taking a severely reduced income. Valentine Browne either could not or would not restore O'Rathaille's position. It is likely that the refusal of this request was sufficiently devastating for O'Rathaille to compose this bitter and mournful poem in which he launches a vitriolic attack on the new English gentry like Valentine Browne and makes reference to the failure of the Jacobites as being a primary cause for his own situation. The tune Dans En Dro is a traditional breton tune. It's stark simplicity and moderate pace make it a fitting backdrop to this powerful poem.

Valentine Brown

A distressing sorrow has spread over my old hardened heart
Since the foreign demons have come amongst us in the land of Conn,
A cloud upon the sun of the west to whom the kingship of Munster was due;
It is this which has caused me ever to have recourse to thee, Valentine Brown.

First, Cashel without society, guest-house, or horsemen,
And Brian's turreted mansions black-flooded with otters,
Ealla without the government of a chief descended from the kings of Munster;
It is this which has caused me ever to have recourse to thee, Valentine Brown.

The wild deer has lost the noble shape that was her wont before,
Since the foreign raven nestled in the thick wood of Ross;
The fishes shun the sun-lit stream and the calm, delightful rivulet;
It is this which has caused me ever to have recourse to thee, Valentine Brown.

Dairinis in the west – it has no lord of the noble race;
Woe is me! in Hamburg is the lord of the gentle merry heroes;
Aged, grey-browed eyes, bitterly weeping for each of these,
Have caused me ever to have recourse to thee Valentine Brown.

The feathers of swift flocks fly adown the wind
Like the wretched fur of a cat on a waste of heather;
Cattle refuse to yield their milk to their calves
Since Sir Valentine usurped the rights of the noble MacCarthy.

Pan directed his eyes over the high lands,
Wondering where Mars had gone, whose departure brought us death;
Dwarfish churls ply the sword of the three fates,
Hacking the dead crosswise from head to foot.

Notes:

- The earl of Clancarty (a MacCarthy) died in the territory of Hamburg in 1734.
- Pan and Mars are references to William III and James II respectively.
- The dwarfish churls are no doubt Cronin and Griffin.



11. The Death of the Old Ways – *March and Slow Reel* – Heaton Chapel / Julia Delaney

The failure of the Jacobite cause in Ireland and the success of William III in retaining the throne is widely seen in popular culture as a victory of Protestantism over Catholicism. This view has been exacerbated by the activities of the Orange Order. However, in reality, the Williamite War was an extension of the war that was ongoing in Europe between France on one side and Spain and Holland on the other. Ireland was involved in this war only because of its geographical location. France supported James in Ireland in order to gain control of England from William. William could not allow Ireland to be used as a base from which the French could launch attacks and distract him from defending Holland against French incursions. William, despite being protestant, was supported by the pope and Catholic Spain was one of William's allies. Therefore, in terms of the overall politics of the war, religion was of very little importance. What was of importance, as with almost all wars, was money and land.

In Ireland, the accession of James to the throne of England had given hope to the Catholic landlord class because of the fact that James had made moves to improve the rights of Catholics in England (which was the main reason he was deposed). Their own economic interest was served by supporting James as they hoped that the Cromwellian settlements would be revoked enabling them to return to ownership of lands which they, or their ancestors had owned in pre-Cromwell times. The majority of Ireland's arable land was at the time owned by less than one-sixth of the total population, the land-owning minority being almost completely members of the Protestant landlord class. It was financial interest that determined the sides of the aristocracy in Ireland. For the majority of the population who possessed no land, there was only the hope that things would be better under James - an idea for which there was very little evidence. Despite this, for many years after the war, Irish Catholics maintained a sentimental attachment to the Jacobite cause, portraying James and the Stuarts as the rightful monarchs who would have given a just settlement to Ireland (including self-government and restoration of confiscated lands) and supported Catholicism.

Aodhagán O'Rathaille is credited with creating the first Aisling poem (a type of poem where Ireland is portrayed as a beautiful woman who bewails the current state of affairs and predicts an imminent revival of fortune, usually linked to the return of a Stuart King to the English throne.) This style of poetry was often copied in later years.

The end of the Williamite War was also the end of a turbulent and violent episode in Irish history. The quick succession of the Desmond Rebellions, the Nine Years War, the Cromwell Campaign and eventually the Williamite War, plus the cultural and economical drain as result of the Flight of the Earls and the Flight of the Wild Geese, had brought an end to the old ways. There was no longer any significant number of Irish gentry to support the arts and traditions of the bards and the Irish language, music and history declined very quickly. The English Protestant ruling class passed a series of laws aimed at oppressing the native Irish and maintaining their position of privilege and wealth over a subject population.

The march and slow reel which comprise this set give the impression of a battle fought and ultimately lost. This battle was the attempt to keep Irish language and music alive in the years following the Williamite War. The conclusion was the effective death of the bardic tradition and the loss of a huge wealth of tradition. The inclusion of a modern composition in this set is a tribute to those who continue to try to keep Irish music and language traditions alive. The resurgence in the playing of traditional music over the last four decades is a clear indication that the battle has not been lost yet.

The march Heaton Chapel was composed by fluter Kevin Crawford and refers to the area of Manchester that his wife is from. Julia Delaney was named by the great tune collector Captain Francis O'Neill in honour of the wife of uilleann piper Bernard Delaney.

12. O'Rathaille's Grave – *Poem and Slow Air* - The Poet on his Death-Bed Writing to his Friend Having from Certain Causes Fallen into Despondancy / O'Rathaille's Grave

The final poem composed by O'Rathaille is one of the finest of Irish literature and the ultimate expression of the rage and loss that O' Rathaille had been presenting in poetry during most of his life. O'Rathaille's life is a microcosm of the changes in culture and society which occurred in Ireland during the end of the 17th century. His loss of status and resultant destitution are direct parallels of the death of the bardic tradition and the subsequent near extinction of the Irish language and music.

The slow air played beneath the recital is a beautiful lament commemorating the death of the last of the great bards of Munster. Aodhagán O'Rathaille is buried in Muckross Abbey near Killarney in County Kerry.

The Poet on his Death-Bed Writing to his Friend Having from Certain Causes Fallen into Despondancy

I will not cry for help, till I am put into the narrow coffin,
And I swear, it would bring it no nearer if I did,
Our whole support, the strong-handed prime of the seed of Eoghan –
His strength is undermined, and his vigour gone to decay.

My mind shudders like a wave, my chief hope is gone,
My entrails are pierced through, venomous darts penetrate my heart;
Our land, our shelter, our woods, our fair neighbourhood,
Are pawned for a penny to a band from the land of Dover!

The Shannon, the Liffey and the tuneful Lee have become discordant,
The stream of the Blackwater, of Brick, of the Bride and the Boyne,
The waters of Lough Derg and Tonn Tóime are blood-reddened,
Since the Knave utterly vanquished the crowned king.

Incessant is my cry; I am ever shedding tears,
Heavy is my woe, I am a man oppressed,
All music forsakes me as I wander the roads weeping,
Save the squeal of the Hog No Arrows Wound.

The lord of the Rinn, of Kill, and the land of Eoghanacht –
Want and injustice have wasted away his strength!
A hawk now holds these places and exacts their rent.
He shows no-one benevolence, not even his own blood-kin.

Because of the great ruin that has befallen the race of the proud kings,
The water ploughs in grief down from my temples,
Sources giving forth raging streams,
Into the river that flows from Truipell to pleasant Youghal.

I will cease now; death is swiftly approaching
Now that the warriors of the Laune, of Lein and of the Lee are destroyed.
I will follow those beloved heroes to the grave,
Those princes whom my ancestors served before the death of Christ.

Notes:

- The Knave and King are William III and James II respectively.
- The Hog No Arrows Wound is a reference to Torc Waterfall situated near Muckross Abbey.



13. Bonus Track: The Musician's Lament – *Poem and Lament* – The Curse of Cromwell / The Musician's Lament

The Musician's Lament was composed by members of Gan Ainm and was recorded several years before the other material on this album. The poem The Curse of Cromwell was penned by the legendary Irish poet William Butler Yeats. It makes reference to Aodhagán O'Rathaille in the first verse as it repeats the assertion made in his death bed poem that his forefathers served the Irish nobility since before the birth of Christ.

The Curse of Cromwell

You ask what I have found, and far and wide I go:
Nothing but Cromwell's house and Cromwell's murderous crew,
The lovers and the dancers are beaten into the clay,
And the tall men and the swordsmen and the horsemen, where are they?
And there is an old beggar wandering in his pride—
His fathers served their fathers before Christ was crucified.
O what of that, O what of that,
What is there left to say?

All neighbourly content and easy talk are gone,
But there's no good complaining, for money's rant is on.
He that's mounting up must on his neighbour mount,
And we and all the Muses are things of no account.
They have schooling of their own, but I pass their schooling by,
What can they know that we know that know the time to die?
O what of that, O what of that,
What is there left to say?

But there's another knowledge that my heart destroys,
As the fox in the old fable destroyed the Spartan boy's
Because it proves that things both can and cannot be;
That the swordsmen and the ladies can still keep company,
Can pay the poet for a verse and hear the fiddle sound,
That I am still their servant though all are underground.
O what of that, O what of that,
What is there left to say?

I came on a great house in the middle of the night,
Its open lighted doorway and its windows all alight,
And all my friends were there and made me welcome too;
But I woke in an old ruin that the winds howled through;
And when I pay attention I must out and walk
Among the dogs and horses that understand my talk.
O what of that, O what of that,
What is there left to say?