Ó Rathaille, Aogán

by Michael Lillis

Ó Rathaille, Aogán (1670?–1728/9), poet, was probably born in Co. Kerry.

**Origins** There is no direct evidence of his date of birth or family origins, but notes in multiple manuscript compilations of his work agree that he was born on the Kerry side of the intersection of counties Kerry, Limerick, and Cork in the Sliabh Luachra region. Persistent oral tradition has further narrowed the location of his family’s farm to Scrahanaveal, ten miles east of Killarney. Ó Buachalla has plausibly proposed that references to one Rahilly as witness in the legal documents of the English Brownes, lords of Kenmare, towards the end of the 17th century suggest that Ó Rathaille’s family were well established and highly regarded in the locality (*Dánta* (2004), 27). It further seems that they had collected rents locally on behalf of the English Browne family. Seán Ó Tuama (1926–2006) cites references to this effect in the otherwise unpublished poem ‘Buachaill Ruistín de Rís’ (*Filí*, 87). Ó Tuama also points to his mother’s family the Egans (hence ‘Aogán’) who had lands between Killorglin and Killarney and were important traditional judges and tenants of the MacCarthy’s estate at Pallas. A reference in his poem lamenting the dispossession of Eoghan Mac Chormaic Riabhaigh Mhic Charrthaigh (poem xxxvi, 241) to ‘ionad mo shean le seal in Uíbh Laoghaire’ (‘the fact that my forbears lived for a while in Iveleary’) suggests earlier West Cork family connections and the names of two townlands near Inchegheela, which include ‘Rathaille’, give some credence to this supposition.

**Education** There are no verifiable facts as to Ó Rathaille’s education, and no evidence that his family could claim hereditary bardic status. Nevertheless Ó Rathaille clearly saw himself as a professional poet of the ebbing phase of the post-bardic tradition and he passionately asserted his family’s immemorial privileged connection as men of learning to the great families of West Munster; this may indeed reflect the role of the Egans with the family of Clancarty (an Cárrthach Mór). The formal role of the traditional professional bards – Ó Rathaille’s predecessors as he would have seen them – had been during the previous five centuries to celebrate in the dense syllabic verse forms of the *dán díreach* the genealogies, exploits, and great events – principally the births, marriages, and deaths – of their patrons, the old ruling families, and otherwise to entertain them with pithy, cerebral comment on less exalted matters. His easy familiarity with the vocabulary and content of later medieval and bardic Irish literature and history, his acquaintance with Irish, Greek and Roman mythology, his own work in copying earlier manuscripts and his evident mastery of English and Latin – all bespeak an education for an *ollamh*, perhaps by the clergy and other men of learning at one or several of the surviving great houses of the locality, such as the homes of the many septs of the MacCarthys or of Ó Donnchú of Glenflesk.
Poetic technique and themes Ó Rathaille composed in the assonantal metric of the *amhrán*, which in his lifetime was a fresh and accessible idiom, more expressive of emotion than the arcane *dán direach*. The rhythms of most of his poems come close to those of vernacular speech and in many cases even to those of popular song. His lively and detailed descriptions of the courts of the MacCarthys and other Munster families, including some of those of the Old English Jacobites who had replaced them, such as Warner (*An file i gCaisleán an Tóchar*, poem x) show that he frequented those circles in his youth and throughout most of his life. His ‘professional’ themes remained however for the most part those of the bardic canon. These elegies and eulogies are always highly competent, but often somewhat standardised performances, reciting litanies of genealogical, mythological, literary, and historical references. Sometimes they surprise with a succession of lively strophes describing the everyday life of the old houses (e.g. ‘Ar bhás Uí Cheallacháin’, poem xv, 65–100).

Sometimes they are enlivened with blasts of shocking invective against the native *arrivistes* who seized the lands of Ó Rathaille's patrons, notably ‘Don Taoiseach Eoghan Mac Chormaic Riabhhaigh Mhic Chárrthaigh’ (poem xxxv, 93–112 et passim), and his savage satire on Murtagh O'Griffin in death and Tadhg Cronin while still alive (poem xvii). Regularly the standard imagery is interrupted by brilliant shafts (e.g. in the elegy ‘Ar bhás an fhír chéanna’, poem xvi, 4 – ‘do saigeadh le hínntleacht an bháis’ – ‘who was mown down by the arrow-intellect of death’). Occasionally even in his great lyrics Ó Rathaille employed a word or a phrase that would have sounded archaic to his contemporaries, such as the extraordinarily effective Early Irish preterite form ‘lodamar’ in ‘Ar mhullach chnoic aoir do lodamar suas’ in the mystical ‘An aisling’ (poem v, 2).

Jacobitism and the *aisling* The event that destroyed Ó Rathaille’s universe was the defeat by William of Orange (qv) of James II (qv) at the Boyne in July 1690, followed by the rout of the Jacobites at Aughrim in 1691 and the betrayals that followed the Treaty of Limerick. In west Munster virtually all the Old Irish families and many of the Old English – who by then had made marriage alliances with local culture, language, and religion – had been and afterwards remained committed to King James. Many, including the main branches of those families whom Ó Rathaille considered his ‘chieftains’ and sponsors, the MacCarthys and Brownes (Lords Kenmare) of Kerry, were partly or wholly dispossessed of their lands, at least for their lifetimes, and driven into exile in continental Europe. They were replaced by the New English planters of the Hanoverian age and their Irish carpetbaggers.

The resistance to the Williamite and Hanoverian settlements in Ireland, Scotland and England, and among the Irish and other Jacobite exiles in France, Spain and elsewhere in Europe – inspired the generational but finally ill-fated Jacobite struggles, which to the later onlooker can seem pointless and foredoomed to failure. They did not seem so to Ó Rathaille or the supporters of the Jacobite cause for whom they were matters of life or death, nor to their enemies in the new regime
who constantly feared French invasion and Jacobite vengeance as real and present threats. Royalist and catholic to the last, the Jacobites believed that the will of God and the laws of monarchy and nature were directly affronted by the theft of the throne from James II and by the theft of the lands both of the old families (both Irish and Old English) and their humbler tenants such as Ó Rathaille.

The new masters despised the old order and its traditional patronage of men of learning and poets such as Ó Rathaille, who attempted to keep the dream of imminent invasion alive among the old Gaelic order and the Old English in Munster. Typical of several political poems intended to encourage hope, vengeance and military enthusiasm are ‘Créachta Crích Fódla’ (poem i, ‘The wounds of the Land of Fodla), ‘An milleadh d’imigh ar mhór-shleachtaibh na hÉireann’ (poem ii, ‘The ruin that befell the great families of Ireland’) and the vigorous ‘Tionól na bhFear Muimhneach’ (poem xx, ‘The hosting of the men of Munster’) which lists the great families and their commitment and preparations for war as well as their allies in Europe, (now) including the pope. Ó Rathaille, a great hater, mocks the cuckold reputation of King George I: ‘O Bhristó tig ceann cait ag leigheas ar an gcampa / Trí hadharca agus feam air mar chluinim’ (‘From Bristol came an Owl (a cat’s head) to relieve the camp / Three horns on him and a ‘tail’, I hear’) (lines 25–6).

None of Ó Rathaille’s aislingí, unlike his more straightforward military or political verse, fulfils the conventional role of its day of encouraging Jacobite hopes of inevitable military victory. While his versions of the formula begin with a visitation by Ireland in the image of a young beauty, and while they all rehearse the Jacobite dream of restoration, the poet’s conclusion is invariably despairing. Ó Rathaille’s personal pessimism is searingly grounded in this contrast.

The most dream-like and hopeful of all of his Jacobite visions, painted in enchanting lines, is that of Aoibheall and her hood-cloaked troop of fairy women lighting in the darkness three candles in every harbour in Ireland to welcome the Pretender in ‘Aisling’ (poem v). The poem begins with the Jacobite host marching to a hilltop in Limerick in the pre-dawn and ends with the poet awakening alone in despair to what might be described as the Jacobite hangover:D’fhreagair an bhríd Aoibhill, nár dhorchá snuadh; dhachain na dtrí goinne do lasadh ar gach cuan, In aín an rí dhiógraí bhéas againn go luathl gceannas na dtrí ríochta, ’s dá gcosnadh go buan.’As m’aíslinge do shlímbhíogas go hachomair suasls do mheasas gurbh fhíor d’Aoibhill gach sonas dá luaidh; Is amhlaigh bhios timchreathach doibhir duairc, Maidean sul smaoin Titan a chosa do luail. (Then answered the lady Aoibhill, of aspect bright, ‘they had cause to light three candles above the harbours in the name of the faithful king who is soon to come to rule and defend the triple realm for ever’.I started up – soft, sudden – out of my dreambelieving the good news Aoibhill told me was true, but found that I was nerve-shaken, downcast and morosethat morning ere Titan had thought to stir his feet.) (lines 13–20)
‘Mac an Cheannaí’ (poem iii, ‘The merchant's son’), perhaps the best known of the Ó Rathaille aislings because of its recurrence in the school curriculum, is probably the latest and most despairing of all, although imaginatively the least original. The poet listens to the girlish hopes for rescue of the young maiden and confounds her with news from Spain of the death of a critical leader (either the king of Spain or the duke of Berwick (qv)). Thereupon the girl dies screaming her despair.

In his definitive study of the eighteenth-century aisling – in which Ireland typically appears in a dream to the poet as a beautiful, distressed young woman awaiting rescue by her Jacobite hero – Ó Buachalla says of Ó Rathaille, the most famous (if by no means the most orthodox) practitioner of the form: ‘Ó Rathaille's importance as a poet is that he more than any other succeeded in creating his own poetic universe. Jacobitism is the ideology of that universe, it gives a framework of reference to his entire work, it gives it an unusual unity, it holds together the many themes he handles (religion, royalism, aristocracy) and the different modes of composition he practised (prophecy, satire, aisling, testament, elegy, ode). It is the aristocratic ethic that guides his whole work and it is the values of that ethic (generosity, religion, nobility, genealogical integrity, respect) that are celebrated throughout.’ (Aisling Ghéar, 344)

Wandering bard After the Jacobite defeat Ó Rathaille was driven from his ancestral farm in Sliabh Luachra to live in poverty on Kerry's wild Atlantic Coast. Folklore cited by Patrick Dinneen (qv) places him at Castlemaine during these years. This probably happened shortly after the expulsion in 1691 of Sir Nicholas Browne (qv), Lord Kenmare, from his estates in counties Kerry, Cork and Limerick ‘for his lifetime’. The paradox of Ó Rathaille's importance as a poet lies in the fact that it was poverty and neglect that inspired almost all of the unsurpassed lyric poems of his last years. Had he continued in his vocational role of bard to the MacCarthys, the Brownes and their neighbours, we probably would not have heard a great deal of him.

The only ‘evidence’ – beside a clearly invented folk tale about a daughter – that he was married or had children is in a trenchant line of his complaint (poem vii, 8) about being driven from his home and having to live with the maddening cacophony of the Atlantic storms. Were the chief of the MacCarthy family alive and ruling the lands, he says: ‘go dealbh i dtír Dhuibhneach níor bhuan mo chlann’ (‘my family's future would not be dire penury in Duibhne’). In this context ‘mo chlann’ could equally be translated as ‘my people’ (as Ó Tuama and Kinsella have rendered it in An Duanaire, 141). Given his activities in the following years and the starkly solitary tone of his final poems, it seems likely that his was a poor wandering scholar's bachelor existence, at least from this time on.

During this period – perhaps for as long as thirty years – of enforced ‘exile’ from Sliabh Luachra, he travelled extensively throughout Munster between the houses of the surviving patrons of the traditional men of learning. He earned some kind of living by composing formal poems, mostly elegies, addressed to the families
of Blennerhasset, Ó Laoire, O'Hickey, Gould, John Brown, Finín Ó Donnchú an Ghleanna and Dónall Ó Ceallachán and by copying manuscripts: his copy of Geoffrey Keating's (qv) *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* for the MacSheehy family of Drumcullagher dated July 1722 is today in the NLI. His reputation was growing: copies of his work were already being included in manuscript compilations in Dublin, Limerick, Cork, and Kerry.

**Relations with the Brownes; last years** In April 1720 Sir Nicholas Browne, Lord Kenmare, died in Ghent. His son Sir Valentine Browne (qv), 3rd Viscount Kenmare, who had been educated entirely in London and who loved the opera and flute-playing and who almost certainly spoke no Irish, inherited his great estates in Munster. That this was a moment of surging hope for Ó Rathaille is captured in the joy-filled ‘Epitalamium do Thiarna Chinn Mhara’ (poem xxx – ‘Marriage song for Lord Kenmare’) of some months later that year celebrating the dynastic marriage between Sir Valentine and Honora, daughter of Thomas Butler of Kilcash, another of the great families.

An uncovenanted blow followed: Ó Rathaille clearly expected to have his old farm returned to him in Sliabh Luachra and to resume his role as poet-in-possession to the Kenmare family. In fact Sir Valentine did restore and confirm some of the dispossessed tenants of his estates to their farms and he even provided some patronage to minor poets. For reasons of which we know nothing, a breach arose with Ó Rathaille. Perhaps the poet’s great but (evident) prickly pride gave offence. Ó Rathaille got nothing and the sitting tenant at the old family holding at Scrahanaveal was confirmed in his rights. The disaster inspired an extraordinary riposte (‘Vailintín Brún’ – poem viii). The Brownes had for more a century been accepted in Killarney and in the other Irish-speaking regions of Munster as rightful catholic landlords of English stock and as patrons of the native men of learning, including Ó Rathaille, and they had made marriage alliances with the MacCarthys whom they had partly displaced. Now Ó Rathaille in his rage at Sir Valentine accused the Brownes of usurping the rights of those original chieftains, whose leader Clancarty was in exile in Hamburg. Whatever the provocation, this was an insult which brooked no reconciliation and Ó Rathaille condemned himself to permanent exclusion. In the halting metre of elegy, it is however a magnificent incantation of loss and bitterness:

Do leathnaigh an ciach diachrach fám sheana-chróire dúrar thaisteal na ndiabh n-iasachtach i bhfearrann Choinch Chugainn; scamall ar ghriain iarthair dár cheartas ríocht Mumhanfa deara dhom triall riamh ort, a Vailintín Brún . . .

(Dairinis thiar, iarla níl aici en chlainn úir, i Hamburg, mo chiach! iarla na seabhach síoch subhachseanar rosc liath ag dian-ghol fa cheachtar díobh súdha deara dhom triall riamh ort, a Vailintín Brún. (A mist of pain has covered my dour old heart since the alien devils entered the land of Conn; our Western Sun, Munster’s right ruler, clouded— there’s the reason I’d ever call on you, Valentine Browne . . .) (lines 1–4)

(Dairinis in the West with no earl of the noble race, in Hamburg, to our cost, that Earl over gay peaceful hawks; and these old grey eyes weeping for both these things— there’s the reason I’d ever call on you, Valentine Browne. ) (lines 13–16)
An entry in the *Kenmare manuscripts* for August 1727 discloses that some time before then Ó Rathaille had returned to some few fields of his native area in a condition not better than penury: he possessed only one cow. James Curtain a local administrator in Sliabh Luachra for Lord Kenmare notes: ‘Allowed Egan O'Rahilly, when his only cow was appraized last winter 1726, by James Curtayn, for composing songs for Master Thomas Browne and the rest of His Lordship's children as per song appears as voucher . . . at John Riordan's prayer and request: £1–10s–0d’. As Ó Tuama demonstrates from similar contemporary entries, this award (though by no means puny) was not a payment for poetry by Kenmare, but rather an alms-giving at the instance of John Riordan (Ó Tuama, *Fili*, 116–17).

Aogán Ó Rathaille died between 1728 and early 1729 as evidenced by a lament for his passing in a manuscript written in March 1729. There is a legend that he was buried in the tomb of the O'Rahillys in Muckross Abbey, but this is not substantiated anywhere.

**Translations and assessment** The reader who wishes to communicate his enthusiasm for Ó Rathaille's genius is confronted by a barrier. The fact is that the great poems are resistant to translation at several levels below the surface. In Seán Ó Tuama (1926–2006), Ó Rathaille found his most devoted exegete since Dinneen, and a distinguished Irish language poet and scholar in his own right, and in Thomas Kinsella a first-class Irish language scholar and translator and one of the principal English language poets of the day. Their joint bilingual *An Duanaire: 1600–1900: poems of the dispossessed* (1981) brings to the reader who knows little or no Irish a satisfactory feel for the finest poetry of the three centuries including by far the best rendition of Ó Rathaille's greatest poems. (Except where slight deviations are indicated, the versions and translations of Ó Rathaille’s poems in *An Duanaire* are used in this article; otherwise the originals are from Dinneen and O'Donoghue’s *Dánta Aodhagáin Uí Rathaille* and the translations are my own.)

The unique power of Ó Rathaille’s greatest poetry comes from three sources. First, from his unparalleled mastery of Irish, enriched by a poet-scholar’s brilliant intimacy with the riches of its earlier literature and vocabulary. He strained the language to yield conjunctions of phrase and of layers of meaning never previously imagined. Second, from his domination of all the metrical forms, both the traditional syllabic and the more recent assonantal: he remains the supreme craftsman versifier in Irish. His mastery can only be appreciated fully if the poems are recited aloud or repeated with their full (ideally Kerry) oral values ‘inside the head’, rather than merely visually scanned. And third, from the catastrophic political drama of his times, which crushed his own hopes and those of Jacobites throughout Ireland and western Europe; Ó Rathaille was affected at the deepest emotional level and his response was volcanic and in the end bitter beyond endurance.

It is difficult to find such tempests of political and cultural desolation elsewhere in literature. It has been said that Ó Rathaille ‘out-Leared Lear’. Quevedo in his ‘Miré
los muros de la patria mía’ strikes similar notes in his disgust at the loss of Spain’s Golden Age. Pope in ‘Book iv’ of the Dunciad and Jonathan Swift (qv) at his most indignant convey something of Ó Rathaille’s fury, but the calamities they confronted were not apocalyptic in the sense of the ruin of Ó Rathaille’s total universe. Dinneen points to the Book of Lamentations and cites the Prophet Jeremiah’s lament for Jerusalem: ‘My eyes have failed with weeping, my bowels are troubled; my liver is poured out upon the earth’ (Lamentations, ii, 11). Sometimes, especially in those later lyrics, Ó Rathaille achieves an intensity of expression that can bewilder even the habitual reader.

By the time he was forced from his home to live by Tonn Tóime's Atlantic storms in about 1694, Ó Rathaille had found the voice of mature poetic authority. The poem he wrote at this time, ‘An tan d’aistrigh go Duibhneachaibh láimh le Tonn Tóime i gCiarráí’ (poem vii, ‘On his removing to Duibhneacha, beside Tonn Toime in Kerry’), is the most accessible of the great lyrics. The remarkable opening lines convey in their rhythms and flowing vowel sequences, as Ó Tuama noted, the billowing and fury of the ocean:

*Is fada liom oíche fhír-fhliuch gan suan, gan srann,
Gan ceathra, gan maoin caoire na buaihb na mbeann;
Anfháith ar toinn taoibh liom do bhuaír mo cheann,*
*Is níor chleachtas im naoin fiogaigh na ruacain abhann. (The drenching night drags on: no sleep or snore, no stock, no wealth of sheep, no horned cows. This storm on the waves nearby has harrowed my head— I who ate no winkles or dogfish in my youth.) (lines 1–4)*

The poem concludes with one of his most stirring Envois, shifting in rhythm to a raw peremptory snarl:

*A thonnsa thíos is airde géim go hard,*
*meabhair mo chinnse cloíte od bhéiceach tá;*  
*cabhair da dtíodh arís go hÉirinn bhán,*
*do ghlam nach binn do dhingfinn férn id bhráid. (You wave down there, lifting your loudest roar, the wits in my head are worsted by your wails. If help ever came to lovely Ireland again I'd wedge your ugly howling down your throat!) (lines 17–20)*

The most enthralling and brilliant of all Ó Rathaille's works is the dream-poem 'Gile na gile' (poem iv – ‘Brightness of brightness’). From the manuscript record it appears to have been composed before the Jacobite rising in Scotland in September 1715. It was widely transcribed within a few years. Its unique and intricate metrical structure is so perfectly sustained and its word-play so elaborate that it has sometimes been described as an exercise in the ‘baroque’ and read primarily as a tour de force of versercraft. It fully merits such a description, but that is to miss the core substance of the poem which is itself reinforced by the complex artistry. It belongs to the aisling genre but is sui generis by almost any standard of literature. It is a mistake to read it merely ‘within’ the conventions of the aisling. The poem begins with an exotic description of the mystical visitation who herself mixes thrilling political prophecy with fears of unspoken disaster. The word-speed increases as the speaker confesses that he became the erotic prisoner of the vision (herself a prisoner) and that she disappeared when, St Anthony-like, he called on Mary’s Son to protect him (against evil):

*Leimhe na leimhe dom druidim ‘na cruinntuairim, im chime ag an gcime do snaidhmeadh go fiorchrua me;*  
*ar ghoirm Mhic Muire dom fhortacht, do bhfiog uaimse, is d'imigh an bhruinneal ‘na luisne go bruin Luachra. (Foolish past folly,
I came to her very presencebound tightly, her prisoner (she likewise a prisoner); I invoked Mary's Son for succour; she started from me and vanished like light to the fairy dwelling of Luachair.) (lines 13–16)

Ó Rathaille then achieves the pinnacle of pyrotechnics: without varying the metrical structure, he takes the rhythm to a headlong gallop as the speaker rushed after the visionary maiden and, with a series of stunning word-games ('tinne-bhrugh tigim – ní thuigim . . . ionad na n-ionad do cumadh'), the poet captures the grotesqueness of the druidic palace where he found her: Rithim le rith mire im rithibh go croíluaimneach, trí imeallaibh corraigh, trí mhongaibh, trí shlimruaitigh: don tinne-bhrugh tigim – ní thuigim cen tslí fuaras – go hionad na n-ionad do cumadh le draíocht dhruaga. (Heart pounding, I ran, with a frantic haste in my race, by the margins of marshes, through swamps, over bare moors. To a powerful fire-palace I came, by paths most strange, to that place of all places, erected by druid magic.) (lines 17–20) There the speaker encounters his maiden being lewdly groped by a lumbering brute in a brothel–like dens surrounded by goblins and sluts. They take him prisoner but he confronts the girl: Ar gcloistin mo ghutha di goileann go fíoruaibreach sileadh ag an bhfliche go life as a gríosghruannaibh; cuireann liom gíolla dom choimirc ón mbruín uaithi – 's í gile na gile do chonnarc as slí in uaigneas. (On hearing my voice she wept in high misery and flowing tears fell down from her flushed cheeks. She sent me a guard to guide me out of the palace— that brightness of brightness I saw on the way in loneliness.) (lines 29–32)

‘Gile na gile’ is a vision of mysterious delight and knowledge which, once the Jacobite content is declared, descends into a squalid, erotic nightmare of despair. Its pace, imagery and verbal brilliance have not been equalled in Irish and, while obviously inspired by political passion, the poem remains difficult to interpret.

For many readers, including Dinneen, Ó Rathaille's most sublime production was his well-known 'Deathbed' poem (poem xxi), now usually known by its first words ‘Cabhair ní ghairfead' ('I'll not ask for help'). W. B. Yeats (qv) introduced its famous last line to the world in ‘The curse of Cromwell' as 'His fathers served their fathers before Christ was crucified'. While Ó Buachalla has argued that ‘the death-bed was a common trope in eighteenth-century poetry' (Dánta (2004), 40) and that it is not necessary to read it as written literally during the poet's last days, many readers find the tone and content powerfully redolent of approaching death. Ó Rathaille launches his theme with typical energy: Cabhair ní ghairfead go gcuirtear mé i gcruinn-chomhrainn – dar an leabhar dá ngairinn níor ghaire-de an ní dhomh-sa . . . (No help I'll call till I'm put in the narrow coffin. By the Book it would bring it no nearer if I did!) (lines 1–2). . . Do thonnchrith m'inchin, d'imigh mo phriomh-dhóchas, poll im ionathar, biorra nimhe trím dhrólainn . . . (Wave-shaken is my brain, my chief hope gone. There's a hole in my gut, there are foul spikes through my bowels . . .) (lines 4–5) He hears the onset of death in the grunts of the Old Irish mythological pig or, according to some, the noise of the Torc waterfall — or, possibly in Ó Rathaille's intention, both: Fonn ní thigeann im ghaire ’s mé ag cuí ar bhóithreach foghar
na Muice nach gontar le saigheadóireacht.(No music is nigh as I wail about the roads except the noise of the Pig no arrows wound.) (lines 15–16). The last stanza is stark and imperishable: Stadfad sa feasta – is gar dom éag gan mhoilló treascradh dragain Leamhan, Léin is Laoi; rachad ’na bhfasc le searc na laoch don chill, na flatha fá raibh mo shean roimh éag do Christ. (I will stop now – my death is hurrying nearnow the dragons of the Leamhan, Loch Lein and the Laoi are destroyed. In the grave with this cherished chief I'll join those kings my people served before the death of Christ.) (lines 25 – 28)