

# A poem to Rudhraighe Caoch Ó Mórdha, lord of Laois 1542–7

*Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh*

A PART FROM TWO genealogical fragments added to the Book of Leinster in the fourteenth century, a mere three poems are all that survive of what must have been a substantial corpus of Classical Modern Irish bardic poems composed in honour of members of the Uí Mhórdha (O'Mores) of Laois.<sup>1</sup> These three poems, which praise various heads of the name, all belong to the sixteenth century, and each reflects the violent political atmosphere of that period. The longest, *Maith bhur bhfíor gcatha, a chlann Róigh*, comprising sixty-three quatrains ascribed to Tuileagna Ó Maoil Chonaire in honour of Uaithne Ó Mórdha, slain by crown forces in 1600, belongs to the end of the century. It remains unpublished.<sup>2</sup> To around mid-century belongs the poem *Tnúth Laighean re Láimh gConaill*, seemingly in praise of Conall Óg Ó Mórdha, killed by English forces in 1557. An edition has recently been published by Pádraig Ó Macháin.<sup>3</sup> The poem edited below, *Mairidh teine i dteallach Ghaoidheal*, was composed for Rudhraighe Caoch (mac Conaill mheic Mhaoileachlainn) Ó Mórdha, brother of Conall Óg, grandfather of Uaithne, and lord of Laois from 1542 to 1547. In contrast with Conall Óg and Uaithne, Rudhraighe Caoch died at the hand of his brother after a long-running feud.

Preceding Rudhraighe Caoch in the chieftainship were his father, Conall mac Maoileachlainn (1523–1537), his uncle, Piaras (1537–8), and his brother, Céadach Ruadh (1538–42).<sup>4</sup> The period during which the poem was composed was one of great political change: following the rebellion of 'Silken' Thomas Fitzgerald (1534–6) and the downfall of the Kildare Fitzgeralds, the Uí Mhórdha were now dealing more directly with the English administration instead of with the Kildares.

<sup>1</sup>For the fourteenth-century poems (*Sloinneam cró cloinne Domhnaill* and *Dá mbeath fear d'aicme eile*) see Anne O'Sullivan, 'The O'Moore poems in the Book of Leinster', *Celtica* 8 (1968) 182–6.

<sup>2</sup>Copies of *Maith bhur bhfíor gcatha, a chlann Róigh* survive in a number of manuscripts, the earliest of which is Maynooth MS B 8; see Pádraig Ó Macháin, 'The hand of Conall Ó Mórdha', *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 3 (2008) 54–72: 62–4. Uaithne was also subject of two laments in accentual metre, *Conall na nglíadh ndiachrach agus Cú na gCleas* and *A shúilín chroidhe, léig díot do shuan go fóill*, which have been edited by Liam P. Ó Murchú: 'D'Uaithne Ó Mórdha a thit i gcath 17ú Lúnasa 1600', in John Carey, Máire Herbert and Kevin Murray (ed.), *Cín Chille Cúile. Texts, saints and places: essays in honour of Pádraig Ó Riain* (Aberystwyth 2004) 334–53.

<sup>3</sup>'The hand of Conall Ó Mórdha'; Professor Ó Macháin notes the possibility that the poem may have been for Conall Óg's father, Conall (mac Maoileachlainn), who died in 1537.

<sup>4</sup>Walter Fitzgerald, 'Historical notes on the O'Mores and their territory of Leix, to the end of the sixteenth century', *Journal of the County Kildare Archaeological Society* 6 (1909–11) 1–88: 76.

By 1538 this had resulted in a factional split among the Uí Mhórdha which merged with a wider dispute between the Earl of Ossory (Piers Butler) and the lord deputy, Leonard Grey. Piaras Ó Mórdha sided with Ossory while Rudhraighe and his two brothers, Céadach Ruadh and Giolla Pádraig, sided with the lord deputy. Further division followed the replacement of Piaras by Céadach Ruadh as chief in late 1538: Rudhraighe remained close to Céadach Ruadh while Giolla Pádraig allied himself with Ó Conchubhair Fhailghe.<sup>5</sup> Following his inauguration, Rudhraighe submitted to the crown under the 'surrender and regrant' scheme in May 1542 and ostensibly remained loyal to the English government.<sup>6</sup> However, the dispute with his younger brother, Giolla Pádraig, continued, interlinking with a factional dispute between Grey's successor, Anthony St Leger and James, 9th Earl of Ormond, whose clients included Rudhraighe, and whose daughter, Margaret, Rudhraighe married in 1543/4. The feud ended with Rudhraighe's murder at the hands of Giolla Pádraig, who then became chief (1547-9).<sup>7</sup>

Rudhraighe is mentioned in the poem by first name (quatrains 6, 10, 12, 34 and 45), by family name (5 and 11), as 'Conall's son' (11 and 31), and as 'Conall's heir' (14). Allusions are also made to remote ancestors of the Uí Mhórdha (for which see especially the note on line 6b). Nowhere, however, is Rudhraighe styled 'Ó Mórdha', namely chief of his name. In view of this fact, and of the depiction of the patron throughout the poem as one who is about to burst onto the scene, we may suppose that *Mairidh teine i dteallach Ghaoidheal* was composed before Rudhraighe's inauguration as chief of the Uí Mhórdha in 1542. The poem may therefore be viewed as a piece of electioneering propaganda in which its patron is presented as a firebrand who is worthy of leading the family. Its message is conveyed by the use of metaphor, historical precedent, prophecy, and various other traditional bardic forms of praise. In this, the poem conforms to a well-tested template associated with the genre.

The early part of the poem (as well as quatrains 34, 36 and 37) involves an image of the reinvigoration by Rudhraighe of the fire in 'the Gaoidhil's hearth'. This may be understood as a reference to Tara and to the notional but symbolically important high-kingship centred therein. Hitherto hidden in its embers, the patron is presented as 'a fireball about to burst forth' (q. 3) and as one for whom 'it is a

<sup>5</sup>Vincent P. Carey, 'The end of the Gaelic political order: the O'More lordship of Laois 1536-1603', in William Nolan and Pádraig G. Lane (ed.), *Laois: history and society, interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin 1999) 213-56: 217-18; Emmet O'Byrne, *War, politics and the Irish of Leinster, 1156-1606* (Dublin 2003) 164-5.

<sup>6</sup>Rudhraighe Caoch's submission to the crown is published in J. S. Brewer and William Bullen, *Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts preserved in the Archbishopal Library at Lambeth, 1515-1574* (London 1867) 185-6.

<sup>7</sup>O'Byrne, *War, politics and the Irish of Leinster*, 172-3.

fitting time to be unleashed' (q. 5). Furthermore, in quatrain 6 we are told that he has been chosen by Tara over many other suitors to be her mate. The presentation of a prospective local territorial chief in terms of his suitability for the high-kingship is a conventional bardic conceit (as is the idea that a king is wedded to the woman who personifies his kingdom's sovereignty). It is also customary in a poem to a Gaelic patron to present him as capable of overthrowing the *Goill*, and indeed we are told in quatrains 4 and 5 of the fear Rudhraighe inspires among the *Goill*. This theme is returned to in quatrains 35, 37 and 42. Traditionally, this might have meant Old English stock of Anglo-Norman descent. However, given the changed political circumstances of the period, the reference may be directed specifically towards the English.

Quatrains 15–30 comprise an apologue which features the legendary story of the revolt of the *aitheachthuatha* ('vassal-tribes'), whose treacherous reign is brought to an end by the return to the kingship of the rightful heir, Tuathal Teachtmhar.<sup>8</sup> The high-king, Fiacha Fionnfholaídh, is slain by the vassal-tribes of Ireland and replaced by Féilim mac Conraigh, under whose rule nature fails to prosper. The nobles are all massacred by the vassals, except for one, Tuathal Teachtmhar, who escapes to Scotland in his mother's womb. His mother was Eithne, daughter of the king of Scotland. After 20 years, Tuathal returns to Ireland with 'the men of Scotland', expels Féilim, and takes the kingship.<sup>9</sup> Having told the story, the poet makes his purpose plain by expressly comparing Rudhraighe Ó Mórdha to Tuathal Teachtmhar. He says that Rudhraighe is as good a mate for Tara as Tuathal was (q. 31), that he is a valorous defender of her land (q. 32), and that he will seize power over Ireland just as Tuathal did (q. 35). In quatrain 33, the notion that Rudhraighe is entitled to the high-kingship is further enforced by reference to the number of his ancestors who achieved that position. Although it is not overtly stated whom the *aitheachthuatha* are to be equated with, it is tempting to see in them a parallel with the growing English administration and power structure which had brought an end to the hegemony of the Kildare Fitzgeralds a short number of years before Rudhraighe's rise to the chieftainship.

<sup>8</sup>Tuathal Teachtmhar was a king who reputedly lived in the early centuries A.D. For a discussion of him in Irish literature and tradition, see T. F. O'Rahilly, *Early Irish history and mythology* (Dublin 1946) 154–70.

<sup>9</sup>A number of other texts going back to the Early Irish period contain a different version of the revolt of the *aitheachthuatha* in which an earlier king, Feradach Finn Fechnach, plays the part of Tuathal Teachtmhar. For a discussion of the different versions with particular emphasis on their occurrence in Middle Irish texts, see Ralph O'Connor, 'Searching for the moral in *Bruiden Meic Da Réo*', *Ériu* 56 (2006) 117–143. The version of the story told in the present poem concurs with that recounted, or alluded to, in other bardic poems from the Early Modern period; see Liam P. Ó Caithnia, *Apalóga na bhfilí 1200–1650* (Dublin 1984) 120–21.

The latter part of the poem includes allusions that connect it with the territory of Laois. In quatrains 38–41, reference is made to Rudhraighe's illustrious ancestor Laoiseach Leannmhór, son of Conall Cearnach, who, according to tradition, came from Ulster and settled in Laois; and in quatrain 44, we are told that Rudhraighe should not relinquish the land of the 'Nore and Barrow'. Finally, some common bardic themes and devices bring the poem to a conclusion: praise of the patron's valour (qq. 43, 45), of his generosity to poets (qq. 47–8), and of his attractiveness to women (qq. 49–50).

### Poet

The poem's author was Eóghan (mac Aodha) Ó Cobhthaigh, a member of a hereditary poetic family who held lands in the barony of Rathconrath, Co. Westmeath, up until the Cromwellian confiscations.<sup>10</sup> He and one Aibhilín (inghean Chathaoir), presumably his wife, are subjects of the unpublished elegy *Dá néall orchra ós iath Uisnigh*, by Diarmaid Ó Cobhthaigh.<sup>11</sup> As Pádraig Breatnach states,<sup>12</sup> Eóghan was possibly a brother of Tadhg (mac Aodha) Ó Cobhthaigh, who died in 1554 and was described in the annals as '*priomh oide Ereann, 7 Alban lé dán*'.<sup>13</sup> Internal evidence in *Dá néall orchra ós iath Uisnigh* indicates that Eóghan was head of his name when he died. Apart from the poem edited below, two other poems by Eóghan are extant: *Failghigh chosnas clú Laighean*, composed for Brian (mac Cathaoir) Ó Conchobhair Fhailghe (d. 1560)<sup>14</sup> and a religious poem, *Fada cuimhnighthear cóir Leinbh*.<sup>15</sup>

### Manuscript Sources

Our chief source for the poem is National Library of Ireland Manuscript G 992, generally known as the Nugent Manuscript (= N here).<sup>16</sup> This vellum manuscript, which can be dated to 1577, consists mostly of miscellaneous bardic poems dating

<sup>10</sup>John Charles Lyons, *The book of surveys and distribution of the estates in the county of Westmeath forfeited in the year 1641* (Mullingar 1852); cf. also Tomás Ua Brádaigh, 'Clann Cobhthaigh', *Ríocht na Midhe* 4 (1967) 26–32; Pádraig Ó Fágáin, *Éigse na hIarmhí* (Baile Átha Cliath 1985) 25–35; Basil Iske, *The green cockatrice* (Dublin 1978) 179–82.

<sup>11</sup>NLI MS G 992 (Nugent Manuscript), ff. 42r–42v.

<sup>12</sup>'In praise of Maghnus Ó Domhnaill', *Celtica* 16 (1984) 63–72: 63.

<sup>13</sup>'Chief Precentor of Ireland and Scotland in poetry' (John O'Donovan (ed.), *Annala Rioghachta Éireann, Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the earliest period to the year 1616 I–VII* (2nd ed., Dublin 1856) V, 1536 (s.a. 1554)).

<sup>14</sup>Published by Lambert McKenna, 'Some Irish bardic poems lxxxix', *Studies* 38 (1949) 57–62. For the year of Ó Conchobhair's death see Fiona Fitzsimons, 'The lordship of O'Connor Faly, 1520–1570', in William Nolan and Timothy P. O'Neill (ed.), *Offaly: history and society, interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin 1998) 208–42: 229.

<sup>15</sup>RIA MS 1 (23 D 14), p. 54.

<sup>16</sup>See digital images at [www.isos.dias.ie](http://www.isos.dias.ie) (consulted August 2009).

from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries. The fact that a large number of these (eighteen out of forty-seven) were composed by members of the Ó Cobhthaigh family suggests that the manuscript was written by a member of that family, possibly for use within their poetic school. The poem appears in its entirety on folios 12v–14r of N. It also appears on pages 31–35 of the seventeenth-century paper manuscript Royal Irish Academy MS 1 (23 D 14) (= D), which was ‘probably [...] written in King’s Co. or the immediate neighbourhood’.<sup>17</sup> It has previously been observed that D derives from N and that it may have been copied directly from it.<sup>18</sup> D’s scribe, though he occasionally makes mistakes, betrays a familiarity with the classical register and often alters the text to better fit the metre. Copies N and D both contain 51 quatrains. Metrical closure (*dúnadh*) forms part of the final quatrain, thus indicating that we have the full poem.

As well as filling gaps where N is now indistinct or illegible, D corrects, or improves upon, a number of readings in N; for example: *úadh* N, *úaidh* D (: *shluaiigh*) (q. 28), and further examples at 2b, 16b, 16d, 19b, 24c, 28b, 28d, 32d, 44a. Readings in D which are inferior to N include: 4a, 8c, 11a, 19b, 19d, 21c, 21d, 22c, 23a, 25b, 26d, 28d, 29d, 33b, 33d, 42d, 50d. It is to be observed that D’s improvements upon N may all be classified as marginal; for example, D’s scribe sometimes chooses by-forms of words that better fit the metre. In contrast, the inferiority of some of D’s readings is substantial; for example, it contains a number of omissions (8c, 19b, 19d, 21c, 50d). A number of readings in D are by-forms of those in N (*Fuigheall* 2a; *bhfhuighbhe* 7a) and these are also metrically acceptable. Finally, there is variation between N and D with regard to the spelling of the names *Fiacha Fionnfholaigh* and *Féilim mac Conraigh*; for discussion, see notes on 17a and 18a. Overall, it may be reiterated that the extent and nature of the scribe’s emendations and errors confirm the view that D derives from N.

In addition to N and D, five quatrains from the poem (qq. 36–40) appear on pages 102–3 of National Library of Ireland MS G 127 (= G), written by Riosdard Tuibear (Richard Tipper) in 1713–15. G’s readings are inferior where they depart from those of the other two copies, particularly in spelling. The exception to this is G’s one superior reading, *laoiseach*, in 38b (see note). G indicates uncertainty with regard to the authorship of the poem. Its heading states: ‘*gothfraidh fionn ó dáladh: ní hedh acht eoghan mac aodh ui cobhtuigh*’ (all in the same hand). Directly after G’s fifth (and last) quatrain the scribe writes: ‘*et cetera cum multis*’. Below this he writes: ‘*as an duan darab tosach: Maire tine a ttealach.gh. et cetera*’. Why he chose to write this extract from the poem is not apparent.

<sup>17</sup>Thomas F. O’Rahilly et al., *Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy I–XXVIII* (Dublin 1926–70) 1.

<sup>18</sup>Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ‘A poem to Toirdhealbhach Luinneach Ó Néill’, *Éigse* 16 (1975–6) 50–66: 51.

## Edition

The edition is based on N. D has been used in some cases, in particular the small number of instances where N is indistinct or illegible. G has been used in one instance, as mentioned above. I include significant variant readings from D and G for the purpose of comparison. The orthography has been normalized silently in the following ways (examples taken from N): tall *e* > *ea* before a broad consonant; tall *e* > *ei* before a slender consonant; *í* > *ío* before a broad consonant (e.g. *nír* > *níor* 31c); *elé* > *eiléi* before a slender consonant (e.g. *tene* > *teine* 1a; *bfhélim* > *bhFéilim* 28c); *elé* > *ealéa* before a broad consonant (e.g. *ghaoidhel* > *Ghaoidheal* 2a; *bél* > *béal* 3a); unstressed *u(i)* > *a(i)* (e.g. *thealluigh* > *theallaigh* 2a; *leantur* > *leantar*); unstressed *io* > *ea* (e.g. *ghaoidhiol* > *Ghaoidheal* 1a); final *-i* > *-e* (e.g. *teilgthi* > *teilgthe* 3a); *as* > *is* (copula or conjunction 'and'); *a* (preposition 'in') > *i*; *gu* (preposition) > *go*. Length marks over *ia*, *ua* and *aoi* have been removed. The use of *dh* and *gh* and the spelling of mutations have been normalized silently (e.g. *doilidh* > *doiligh* 23d; *bhfhloinn* > *bhFloinn* 3c; *hshíol* > *shíol* 19c). Abbreviations have been expanded silently. Editorial non-initial lenition and length marks have been introduced silently. Where I have inserted initial lenition the manuscript reading is given in the apparatus. Historical usage is restored where there is doubling of the consonants *n* and *r* (e.g. *innse* > *inse* 16b); these and other departures from the manuscript readings can be deduced from the apparatus, and where significant are discussed in the notes. Punctuation, capital letters and word division are editorial.

## Metre

The metre of the poem is *séadna* (*dán díreach*). Lines *a* and *c* have eight syllables and end in a disyllabic word. Lines *b* and *d* have seven syllables and end in a monosyllabic word. Alliteration occurs in every line (in line *d* it occurs between the penultimate stressed word and the endword) as well as between the endword in line *a* and the first stressed word in line *b* (*lorga*). There is perfect rhyme between the endwords of lines *b* and *d*, and between the endword in line *c* and the penultimate stressed word in *d* (*aicill*); the remaining stressed words in *d* (i.e. those coming before the penultimate and the final) must also have perfect rhyming partners internally in line *c*. Where necessary, I have emended to permitted by-forms of words in order to meet these metrical requirements. For example, in quatrain 14, I emend *gabhtur* to *gabhar* for *aicill*-rhyme with *nDanar*.

*Lorga*-alliteration is absent in the first couplet in quatrain 44. The presence of triple alliteration in both lines may be intended to compensate for this metrical fault (see note on this couplet).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup>My thanks are due to Prof. Damian McManus, to Dr Eoin Mac Cárthaigh, and to the editor of *OLL*, for their help in the preparation of this paper. Any remaining errors are my own.

**Text**

Eoghan mac Aodha Í Chobhthaigh cecinit

1. Mairidh teine i dteallach Ghaoidheal;  
a goil fá chách cuirfidh sí;  
ceiltéar lé lasar gach teineadh;  
lasadh is é is deireadh dí.
2. Fuidheal teineadh theallaigh Ghaoidheal  
géabhaidh fós gé fadódh mall;  
tús na teineadh ar-ís adhnaidh  
grís do dheireadh adhnaidh ann.
3. Caor bhruithne re béal a teilgthe  
i dteallach Néill na Naoi nGlas  
fa ghort bhFloinn le hanáil n-uabhair;  
Goill ag gabháil uamhain as.
4. Annamh éinteine is fhearr goradh;  
guais a lasda ar laochraidh Ghall;  
gidh bé fós dá goil do ghabhlaigh  
ní fhoil acht tós adhnaidh ann.
5. Crithear bheó do bhí san choigill  
do chrú Mórdha mairidh súd;  
teallach Gaoidheal is uair oircheas  
sgaoileadh uaidh don fhoilcheas úd.

1. Fire still burns in the hearth of the Gaoidhil; it will emit its heat to all; it outshines the flame of all other fires; its ultimate state is to burn.

2. Though it be a slow kindling, the remnant fire in the Gaoidhil's hearth will yet take hold; the embers from the last fire in it are rekindling a new fire.

3. In the hearth of Niall of the Nine Fetters there is a pride-exuding fireball about to burst forth upon the land of Ireland; foreigners are growing fearful as a result.

4. Few fires emit greater heat; the foreign troop fear its being set ablaze; however much of its heat has spread out thus far, it is but the first kindling.

5. Of the race of Mórdha there survives a living spark that has lain hidden in the embers; it is a fitting time for it to be unleashed from the Gaoidhil's hearth.

- 6 Dá hiarraidh gér iomdha céile  
ar chloinn Róigh do-rinne sí;  
le Rudhraighe gur threabh Teamhair  
bean thurbhaidhe d'fhearaibh í.
- 7 Gearr go bhfuighe fear a fhadóidh,  
d'fhios an teallaigh tiocfa sé  
caor shlóigh ó cheardchaibh na gcuradh,  
deargfaidh ré bhfóir nUladh é.
- 8 Teine súd nár saoiladh d'fhadódh;  
dá hadhnadh feasda fríoth tráth;  
gé fada an ceó do fheith uirthé  
a beith beó do-chluinfe cách.
- 9 Fa sheilg dTeamhra ní tráth moille;  
mithidh do sheabhcaibh shíl Róigh;  
lór sealad ag seilg ar Eamhain;  
leanad don cheird dhleaghair dóibh.
- 10 Súil re Rudhraighe ag ráth Bhóinne;  
brosdadh air, ná hiarradh sé;  
móide is béim d'fhearaibh a hiarraidh;  
Teamhair féin 'gá liamhain lé.

6. Though many a suitor sought Tara, she chose the seed of Róich; until she devoted herself to Rudhraighe she was a woman beyond the reach of men.

7. The hearth will shortly get the man to fire it up, he will come in search of it, he will redden it before the Ulster host – a fiery troop forged in the fields of battle.

8. That is a fire that was not expected to take hold; an opportunity has now been got to stoke it up; though a layer of ash has long lingered on it everyone will hear that it lives.

9. There can be no delay with regard to seeking Tara; the time is ripe for the heroes of Róich's race; a while spent seeking Eamhain was sufficient; let them [now] follow their rightful calling.

10. Rudhraighe is expected at the fort of the Boyne; let him hasten, let him not ask! Tara is insulted by being [merely] asked; all the greater is the blemish on men who do so.



- 11 Ar fhógra shluaighidh shíl Mhórdha  
mac Conaill ná cuireadh uain  
uain deargtha ós ar ghníomh do-ghabhar;  
ceardcha na ríogh falamh fuair.
- 12 Rug Rudhraighe ó ríoghraidh Eamhna  
uain na ceardcha chosnas sé;  
dá teinidh mar budh tós lasaidh  
beiridh fós a lasair lé.
- 13 Teach do théaghadh theallaigh Gaoidheal  
do ghabh air – cá heire is mó!  
níor léig uaidh céidsheal na ceardcha;  
éigean uain a deargtha dó.
- 14 D'éis a gcomhaonta créad fhuirgheas  
oighre Conaill is clann Róigh,  
caor shluaigh asa ngéill nach gabhar,  
gan bhuaín fa fhéin nDanar dóibh?
- 15 Sgéal oirdhearc nach uirsgéal diamhair  
ó dhraoithibh Fódla fríoth linn;  
tarla sé san rolla reampa,  
is é orra a reactha rinn.

11. He has found the forge of kings empty; since the opportunity to redden it is got through action let him not delay the hosting-summons of Mórdha's race.

12. Rudhraighe has taken from the kings of Eamhain a turn at the forge he defends [i.e. Tara's forge]; it still lights up as if it were [its] first kindling.

13. He has taken it upon himself to come to warm the Gaoidhil's hearth – what greater burden! He has allowed no one else first turn at the forge; opportunity to ignite it must go to him.

14. Following the alliance of Conall's heir and the descendants of Róich – a cohesive force whose hostages are not taken – what can hold them back from attacking the English?

15. A well-known tale not at all obscure comes to us from the learned men of Ireland; it was before them in [their] book; this guaranteed that we would hear it.

- 16 Feall ar ríoghraidh rátha Teamhra  
triallaid athaigh inse Fáil;  
lór do ghníomh a nguín do námhaid,  
an fhuil ríogh cá dámaid dáibh?
- 17 Fiacha Fionnfholaídh, flaith Gaoidheal,  
gníomh oirdhearc a oidhidh súd;  
seal gan tairthe d'fhás i nÉirinn  
do bás d'aithle an éinfill úd.
- 18 Ríoghaid ann Fhéilim mac Conraigh  
ós cionn Éireann d'éis an fhill;  
do-ghéabh ón líne dá leantar  
an sgéal fíre reacthar rinn.
- 19 Fágbhais i mbroinn beart nár fholáir  
d'oighre ar airdrígh inse Fáil;  
ar n-oidhidh shaorshlat shíol Luighdheach  
aonmhac ríogh dob fhuighleach áir.
- 20 Rí Alban dob ainm dá hathair;  
Eithne ag eólchaibh a hainm súd;  
ag inghin ríogh tharla an toirrcheas;  
díon Banbha san fhoilcheas úd.

16. The vassal tribes of Ireland set about treachery against the kings of the fort of Tara; the slaying of the royal blood by an enemy was, in short, a momentous act.

17. The killing of Fiacha Fionnfholaídh, king of the Gaoidhil, is a well-known act; no fruit grew in Ireland for a time after that treacherous deed.

18. After the treachery they make Féilim son of Conrach king over Ireland; I will impart the true story we are told from the [genealogical] line that is traced.

19. [Fiacha] left in a womb that which was required for to make an heir to a high-king of Ireland; one royal son was all that survived after the slaughter of the noble scions of the line of Lughaidh.

20. It was a king's daughter who became pregnant; her father's title was King of Scotland; the learned say her name was Eithne; Ireland's salvation was embodied in that concealment.

- 21 Níor mhair éinneach d'fhuil na n-airdríogh  
– d'inis Luighdheach fa lór d'fhís –  
go breith an ríogh don fhréimh fhíre,  
go n-éir síol na ríge a-rís.
- 22 A gcroinn abhla d'éis a mbuana,  
fa bile cnuais an crann úd,  
don fhiodhbhaidh ríogh do fhás aonchrann,  
díol i mbás a saorchlann súd.
- 23 Acht éanmhac lér éalaigh mháthair  
mac Conraigh ar gcor a n-áir,  
clár Breagh ar n-oidhidh a fhoirne,  
doiligh gan fhear gcoimhdhe an chláir.
- 24 Do sheachna a meic ar mac Conraigh  
críoch Alban do ionnsaigh sí;  
gur ghluais lé a heighir a hÉirinn  
geibhidh do ghuais Fhéilim í.
- 25 Gan teacht d'fhéachain inse Fódla  
fiche bliadhain do bhí tall  
nach rugadh geall a ghníomh n-oirdhearc  
i gceann ar líon d'oirbheart ann.

21. No one of the blood of the high-kings survived – what a portent for Ireland! – till the birth of the true-blooded king, with the result that the seed of the kingship rises again!

22. A single tree sprang forth from the royal forest after the destruction of their apple-trees; it was a mighty fruit-laden tree [and] compensation for the death of their noble families.

23. It is a bitter thing that Breagha's plain had no man to protect it following the slaying of its host, Conrach's son having slain them [all] apart from one son whose mother escaped with him.

24. Seized of such fear of Féilim she departed from Ireland with her son; to protect him from Conrach's son she made for the land of Scotland.

25. Never laying eyes on the land of Ireland, he was twenty years abroad, during which [time] his great deeds were unsurpassed [even] in the face of all [of Scotland's] valour.

- 26 Gairm ortha go hoighre bhFiachaidh,  
fir Alban nár aontaigh síodh,  
gluaisid ar séan n-uaire ar eachtra  
le néall nuaidhe reactha an ríogh.
- 27 Tuathal Teachtmhar fa hard aigheadh  
do fhiafraigh, 's ní d'anmhain tall,  
'Caidhe a-nois an t-eól a hAlbain?'  
Seól i gcrois do ardaigh ann.
- 28 An Tuathal úd, airdrí Gaoidheal,  
do gluaiseadh leis líon a shluaigh;  
d'agra fhaladh ar fonn bhFéilim  
aghadh long ar Éirinn uaidh.
- 29 Ar mac Conraigh fá chrích bhFódla  
fógra catha cuiris uadh;  
ar dteacht tar muir le fíor bhflatha  
do chuir a líon catha i gcuan.
- 30 San chath-soin do chuir fán rígh  
rug Tuathal ar dteacht a-nall  
a láimh bhiodhbhadh tar ais Éirinn  
gur diongbhadh lais Fhéilim ann.

26. Summoned to Fiacha's heir, the unyielding men of Scotland set forth on a journey at a propitious hour with a new vision for proclaiming the king [of Ireland].

27. Wishing not to remain abroad, lofty-minded Tuathal Teachtmhar enquired, 'Which is the right way out of Scotland?' He then hoisted a sail on a ship-mast.

28. That Tuathal, high-king of the Gaoidhil, mobilized his full muster; to avenge the treachery of the land of Féilim he pointed his ships towards Ireland.

29. On crossing the sea with a ruler's truth he put his battle-host ashore; he declared war on Conrach's son over the land of Ireland.

30. In that battle that he fought over the kingship after coming over [the sea], Tuathal took Ireland back from the hand of the enemy and expelled Féilim.

- 31 Ar mac gConaill ní cóir toirmeasg,  
 Tuathal Teachtmhar léir théigh sí,  
 níor chóra i láimh Thuathail Teamhair,  
 más dáigh nuachair d'fhearaibh í.
- 32 Bearta coimhéada chláir Luighdheach  
 'na leith ó chách cuirthear súd;  
 níor chleacht éinfhear acht le hoirbheart  
 déineamh na mbeart n-oirdhearc úd.
- 33 Cóigear ríogh i ríge Éireann  
 ar fhichid ríogh ráinig sinn  
 d'fhine Róigh – is fuighle fíre –  
 do-sóigh cuimhne an líne linn.
- 34 Teallach Gaoidheal géabhaidh fhadódh;  
 iúl ar Rudhraighe ó rug sé  
 an teine ag teacht ar a haghaidh;  
 tearc reimhe do adhain é.
- 35 Mar rug Tuathal treise Banbha  
 béaraidh cuingidh cloinne Róigh;  
 múr Té do chabhair ní cheileabh;  
 Danair budh é is deireadh dhóibh.

31. If Tara is marriageable for men, [then] Conall's son [i.e. Rudhraighe] should not be kept [from her]; she was not more fitted to the hands of Tuathal Teachtmhar who once warmed her.

32. The actions [required] to protect Ireland are attributed to him [i.e. Rudhraighe] by all; no one ever executed such distinguished deeds without valour.

33. I count twenty-five kings in the kingship of Ireland [who came] from among the tribe of Róich – these words are true – I can remember the [genealogical] line.

34. Ireland's hearth will be aflame; since getting to know Rudhraighe [its] fire has grown; few before him have set it ablaze.

35. As Tuathal seized power over Ireland so will the hero of the race of Róich; I declare that Tara will be saved [by him]; he will be the downfall of the English.

- 36 Níor las teine theallaigh Ghaoidheal  
a gobha féin go bhfuair sí;  
teine mhall do mhuidh i n-aoinfheacht,  
ann do chuir a draoidheacht dí.
- 37 Budh eagail dóibh dáil a crithear  
caor san teallach tarla beó;  
léigfidh d'anáil fa fhóir n-eachtrann  
nár fhaláir dóibh leathrom leó.
- 38 Díorma curadh go crích Laoisigh,  
Laoiseach Leannmhór fa lán seóil,  
seóltar é 's a ealta mhíleadh,  
sé reampa dob fhírfhear eóil.
- 39 Tig le hoighre Chonaill Chearnaigh  
caor dheaghshluaigh nach diúltfa gleó;  
gan chor sligheadh don dáimh dhaighfhear  
go tileadh chláir Laighean leó.
- 40 Tréan Laighean ar lorg a chéile,  
Cathbhaidh draoi do dheimhnigh sé  
go mbia ag damhraidh chláir na gcuradh;  
do tharngair fáidh Uladh é.

36. The fire of the Gaoidhil's hearth did not light until it got its own smith; it then threw off its stupor [and] the languishing fire burst forth therewith.

37. The shower of sparks from the fireball that has come alive in the hearth will terrify the foreign host and release such fumes around them that they will be left staggering (?).

38. With Laoiseach Leannmhór sped a host of heroes to the land of Laois; he and his warrior-band set forth, he leading them as a true guide.

39. There comes with the heir of Conall Cearnach a good and cohesive troop that will refuse no fight; the company of good men were not deflected from their march until overcoming the land of Leinster.

40. Cathbhaidh the druid asserted that control of Leinster will be had by the warriors of the land of heroes, one after the other; Ulster's prophet foretold it.

- 41 Oighre Conaill, cuingidh Uladh,  
níor eitigh dháimh, níor dhiúlt troid;  
féach gur réidhigh an rian reamhaibh;  
diall re a thréidhibh dleaghair doid.
- 42 Fada go bhfuair fear a cabhra;  
críoch Ghaoidheal ag gabháil tort;  
creach gan tóir le tromshlógh nDanar,  
cóir ormhór a fhaladh ort.
- 43 Cia i Laighnibh do lucht an iomthnúith,  
ar fhuil gCaithír ní cúis rúin,  
nár sháraigh crú Conaill Chearnaigh?  
Cnú dá chrobhaing dearbhaidh dúinn.
- 44 Ní budh inléigthe ar uaim nÉireann  
an mír málla is míne fuinn,  
Feóir is Bearbha na bhfíodh bhfíthe,  
ó fhior shealbha críche Cuinn.
- 45 Gearr go racha ós ríoghraidh Laighean;  
a linn duas ag dol i méid;  
guais dá gcumhngaighe ar chrú gCaithír;  
clú Rudhraighe ó thaithír téid.

41. The heir of Conall [Cearnach], Ulster's hero, never denied poets or refused a fight; see how he has cleared the path before you; it is right that you imitate his traits.

42. It took a long time for the land of the Gaoidhil to find the man who would save her; she [now] depends (?) on you; she is [like] booty being carried off with impunity by the mighty English host; it is right that you bear the greatest anger at this.

43. It is plain to Cathaoir's race that there is no rival in Leinster who has not been overcome by the stock of Conall Cearnach; one of his descendants proves it to us.

44. For the sake of Ireland's integrity, her foremost chief should not relinquish the pleasant region of smoothest fields, [nor] the Nore and the Barrow of densely-growing trees.

45. He will soon surpass the kings of Leinster; his flood of gifts is increasing; he is a peril to anyone who might encroach upon the land of Cathaoir; Rudhraighe's reputation is beyond reproach.

- 46 Cuisle uaibhreach d'fhíonfhuil Cearbhall  
tre chrú gConaill chosnas blad;h;  
cá fuil díobh nár chuir a comhmaoin,  
dá fhuil ríogh nár chomhmaoidh cradh?
- 47 Baoghlach buain fa bheól na tuinne,  
tonn oinigh nár fhíll ó sgoil;  
ní dhiongna comha chnú n-órdha  
crú modha ar a mórdha a moidh. (?)
- 48 Guais Gaoidhil do ghabháil tnútha  
re truime a ndúas ag díol sgoil;  
do bhreith na gliar ar chrú gConaill,  
dá gclú riamh ní chomhaill crodh.
- 49 Ceilt a grádha ar an ngruaidh bhfaoilidh  
fada ar inghin 'na féagh fia;  
bláth sgath [nó ?] caor ina coimhmeas,  
nó an t-aol ar dhath roinneas ria.
- 50 Créad fá n-iarrradh ortha ghrádha  
acht gruadh ghairthe nár ghríos sgoil  
nó bas gheal go bhfoighéig bhfáinne  
dár choimhéid bean táidhe a tol?

46. A proud stream of the noble blood of Cearbhall mingles with the blood of Conall [Cearnach] which upholds fame; [these] two royal lines who never vaunted wealth have always been generous.

47. It would be dangerous to encounter the wave of generosity that has submerged the poets [so great is it]; [... ?].

48. According to the poets, [mere possession of] wealth does not complete the fame of Conall's race; the extent of their payments to poets leaves the Gaoidhil liable to be seized by jealousy.

49. A maiden has long veiled her love for his handsome cheek as a protective disguise; [his cheek] is like the bloom of flowers, or (?) like a berry, or like lime for the colour it shares with it.

50. He needs no love-charm but his glowing cheek unreddened by poets, or his fair hand and ring for which a paramour has kept her love.



- 51 Don ríoghraidh-se fhréimhe Conaill  
 cia an t-aoinneach dá airde sdair  
 budh éidir do char 'na chomaidh,  
 dá rabh féigin ollaimh air?

Mairidh teine i dteallach Gaoidheal

51. Is there anyone a poet might attempt to compare with him, however famous, from among the kings of the race of Conall?

### Manuscript readings

*Heading:* co. N; cecinit] *omitted in N*; gothfraidh fionn ó dáladh: ní hedh acht eoghan mac aodh ui cobhtuigh G. *This is followed in G by quatrains 36-40; see below.* 1a gáoidheal D; 1d dhí D; 2a Fuigheall D; gáoidheal D; 2b gidh D; 4a énteinne D; sférr D; fe. N; 4c gibe D; 4d fhuil ND; 5a beó N; bí N; co. N; 5b cr. N; 6c tr. N; 7a bhfhuibh D; fa. ND; 7d hé ND; 8c gé] *omitted* D; 8d cl. N; 9d ce. N; dl. D; dhóibh D; 10a ré ND; 11a shlúaidhedh D; 11c do gebhter N, do gabhtur D; 12c theinidh D; 12c mur bhudh N, mur b- D; 13b air] *indistinct in N*; 14a fu. D; 14c gabhtur ND; 14d bu. N; 16b aithigh D; innsi ND; 16d gá D; dt. N, tt. D; dóibh N; 17a Fíacha fionnfhol- N, Fíach- fionnfholadh D; 18a élim D; connrach D, connraigh N; 18d an] as N; 19b ar] *omitted* D; airdri N, áirdrígh D; innsi ND; 19d ríogh] *omitted* D; 20c tharra N, tárta D; 21b fá ND; 21c an] *omitted* D; fréimh ND; 21d a-rís] ris D; 22c dfhás D; 23a élódh D; mháthair] amháthair ND; 23b connraigh N, connrach D; gcur D; 24a connr- ND; 24c hoidhir N, heigher D; 24d éilim D; 25a innsi ND; 25b fithche D; tháll D; 26a orrtha N; 26b síth ND; 26d rígh D; 27a fá ND; 27b tháll D; 28b les N; 28d aghaidh D; úadh N; 29a connr- ND; 29b uaidh ND; 29d ar cúan D; 30d dhi. D; éilim D; 31d dóigh ND; 32d dénamh N; 33b fhithchid D; ríogh] ri ND; rainic ND; 33d do shóigh D; 34a fa. ND; 35b chl. D; 35c ce. N; 35d bhúdh N, b- D; 36a tine thealluid G; gáioideal D; gaoidil G; 36b a gobha] ógabh G; 36c tine G; anéinfhecht G; 36d chur G; 37a chrither D, chrithir G; 37b tealluidh G; 37c léigfíodh G; 37d fholair ND; dh. G; 38a curuidh G; crioich laoisí G; 38b laoisigh N, láois- D; lonnmhór G; 38c 's a] sai G; mi. G; 38d riompa G; 39a chernuidh G; 39b de. G; 39c slíge G; deghfher G; 39d tuluidh chlar G; 40b cathf- ND; cobhtuidh G; 40c mbiáidh G; damhradh chlár G; gcúra G; 40d tharrngair ND; thairnghair G; Uladh] oile G. *In G, quatrain 40 is followed immediately to the right by:* etcetera cum multis; *below it appears the following:* as an duan darab tosach: Maire tine a ttealach .gh. et cetera. 41a cho. D; 41c raon ND; 41d duid N, doit D; 42a capra D; 42b thort D; 42d urmhór ND; 42d a fhaladh] dfhaladh D; 43b ccatháoir D; 43c ce. N; 43d dhá D; cr. N; dhúin D; 44a innleigthe N; 44d chr. D; 45c gcumhguighe ND; ccatháoir D; 45d thatháoir D; 46b cru N; chonuill D; 46c bfuil D; 46d dhá D; fu. N; 47c dhiongna] *indistinct in N*; 47d mhogha D; amoigh D; 48c br. N; chrú] *only initial c visible in N*; 49a ar an ngruaidh] arangruaidh N; 49b inghin 'na féagh] ingh(in) [...] a fegh [*partly illegible*] N, inghin na fhégh D; 49c blath sga[th ... at] caor ina [*partly illegible*] N, bláth sgath bláth cáor na D; 50a ortha ghrádh] órtha g(h)rádh] [*lenition of g uncertain*] N, órrtha grádh] D; 50b gr. N; sgoil D; 50d coiméid N; bean] *omitted* D; toil ND; 51c chor N,

chur D; com. N; 51d féachain N, féighin D. *Closure*: Mairidh [remainder of line omitted] D; ghaoidhil [lenition of initial uncertain] N.

### Notes<sup>20</sup>

1–13 *et passim* With the imagery used in the opening quatrains ('hearth' etc.), compare: *Nír bháidh teine Teallaigh Eachach / as úr gleandál; ard a lasar dhonn nach diombuan, / trom a teannál* 'The fire of green-valleyed Teallach Eachach ("Eochaidh's Hearth") was never quenched; high its steady red blaze, plenteous its firing' (*Magauran* 25.1); *Dá mbáit einioch Fhóid Floinn, / do-ghébhthaoi grís san chogaill* 'Were the hospitality of Flann's land brought down, an ember would be found in the ashes' (*L Bran* 59.21); and *Acht a-mhain co mairenn drithle / gan dol acht [leg. as] da n-íarsma s(i)úd / togbus ces do glainfreimh Ghaoideal / tes saighnein san aoibil úd // 'Na gris a ccoguil clann Mhilih / Mag Mathgamhna mairidh sé / d'eis na saorclann d'écc re hat[h]aidh / cred acht aoncrann achaidh é (Beag mhaireas do mhacraidh Ghaoidheal, RIA MS 90 (24 P 12), p. 140, qq. 15 and 16). That the image presented is one of 'smouldering cinders' (q. 2) and not a quenched fire is important, since an extinguished fire can metaphorically represent the end of a dynasty. The concept is an old one: in early Irish and Welsh law,*

<sup>20</sup>The following abbreviations are employed here:

*AiD* = Lambert McKenna (ed.), *Aithdiogluim dána* I–II (Dublin 1939 and 1940). *BST* = Lambert McKenna (ed.), *Bardic syntactical tracts* (Dublin 1944). *AÓD* = Lambert McKenna (ed.), *Dánta do chum Aonghus Fionn Ó Dálaigh* (Dublin 1919). *BST* = Lambert McKenna (ed.), *Bardic Syntactical Tracts* (Dublin 1944). *Butler* = James Carney (ed.), *Poems on the Butlers of Ormond, Cahir, and Dunboyne (A.D. 1400–1650)* (Dublin 1945). *Corp. Gen. Hib.* = Michael O'Brien (ed.), *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin 1962). *Dán Dé* = Lambert McKenna (ed.), *Dán Dé, the poems of Donnchadh Mór Ó Dálaigh, and the religious poems in the Duanaire of the Yellow book of Lecan* (Dublin [1922]). *DBM* = Cuthbert Mhág Craith (ed.), *Dán na mBráthar Mionúr* I–II (Dublin 1967, 1980). *DiD* = Láimhbheartach Mac Cionnaith (ed.), *Diogluim Dána* (Dublin 1938). *DIL* = E. G. Quin et al. (ed.), *Dictionary of the Irish language based mainly on Old and Middle Irish materials* (compact edition, Dublin 1983). *GB* = N. J. A. Williams (ed.), *The poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe* (Dublin 1980). *IBP* = Osborn Bergin, *Irish bardic poetry* (ed. David Greene and Fergus Kelly, Dublin 1970). *IGT* = Osborn Bergin (ed.), 'Irish grammatical tracts', supplements to *Ériu* 8 (1916), *Ériu* 9 (1921–3), *Ériu* 10 (1926–8), *Ériu* 14 (1946), *Ériu* 17 (1955). *Iomarbhágh* = L. McKenna (ed.), *Iomarbhágh na bhfileadh* I–II (London 1918). *L Bran* = Seán Mac Airt (ed.), *Leabhar Branach: the book of the O'Byrnes* (Dublin 1944). *LCAB* = Tadhg Ó Donnchadha (ed.), *Leabhar Cloinne Aodha Buidhe* (Dublin 1931). *LGen* = Nollaig Ó Muraíle (ed.), *Leabhar mór na ngenealach: the great book of Irish genealogies compiled (1645–66) by Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhísigh* I–V (Dublin 2003). *Magauran* = Lambert McKenna (ed.), *The book of Magauran: leabhar Méig Shamhradháin* (Dublin 1947). *Maguire* = David Greene (ed.), *Duanaire Mhéig Uidhir: the poembook of Cú Chonnacht Mág Uidhir, lord of Fermanagh 1566–1589* (Dublin 1972). *Measgra* = T. F. O'Rahilly (ed.), *Measgra dánta* I–II (Dublin and Cork 1927). *Marcher* = Anne O'Sullivan (ed.), *Poems on marcher lords* (London 1987). *O'Hara* = Lambert McKenna (ed.), *The book of O'Hara: leabhar Í Eadhra* (Dublin 1951). *O'Reilly Poems* = James Carney (ed.), *Poems on the O'Reillys* (Dublin 1950). *Pilib Bocht* = Lambert McKenna (ed.), *Pilib Bocht Ó hUiginn* (Dublin 1931) *SNG* = Kim McCone et al. (ed.), *Stair na Gaeilge in ómós do Pádraig Ó Fiannachta* (Maynooth 1994). *TD* = Eleanor Knott (ed.), *The bardic poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn (1550–1591)* I–II (Dublin 1922 and 1926). *TriBB* = Séathrún Kéitinn, *Trí Bior-ghaoithe an bháis* (ed. Osborn Bergin, Dublin 1931).

terms such as *díbad* ‘extinguishing’ were used to connote the extinction of a family (see Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘Welsh *diffoddi*, *difa* and Irish *do-bádi* and *do-ba*’, *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 23 (1970) 210–13). As for the act of (re)kindling a fire, its symbolic association with the claiming of rightful ownership over a land may be seen in the following extract: *et is ed do rád int aingil: intí ataffeas teinid sunn ria cách, erbid flaith Muman ’na láim* ‘and the angel said: “He who shall first kindle fire here, entrust the kingship of Munster to him”’ (Myles Dillon, ‘The story of the finding of Cashel’, *Ériu* 16 (1952) 61–73 § 4).

2b *gé* When followed by a noun, as here, the more correct form is *giodh*, according to *IGT* i.16. Note that D reads *gidh*.

3c *le hanáil n-uabhair* Cf. *lán dom anáil ón uabhar*, which is translated as ‘I was full of my breath from pride’ in *IBP* (38.16), and as ‘puffed up with pride (?)’ in *DIL*, s.v. *anáil*.

3d *as* I take this to refer to lines *abc* as a whole. It cannot refer to *caor* alone since it is a feminine noun.

4d *tós adhnaidh* Cf. *tús adhnaidh an éigse láin* ‘the first rays of that full moon’ (*AiD* 63.20).

6b *chloinn Róigh* According to Irish tradition, Fearghus mac Róigh and Conall Cearnach were both members of a group of families known as *Síol Rudhraighe* who were descendants of Íor son of Míl Easpáine. The Uí Mhórdha traced their descent to Conall Cearnach (see, for example, *LGen.* 557.4 ff. and 1303.3 ff.). This is reflected in a number of allusions to Conall Cearnach in our poem (quatrains 39a, 41a, 43c, 51a). However, the Uí Mhórdha are referred to here (as well as in quatrains 9b, 14b, 33c, and 35b) as ‘descendants of Róich’, namely, Fearghus mac Róigh, from whom they were not directly descended. The same allusion is to be found with reference to members of the Uí Mhórdha in at least two other poems: quatrain 34 of *Le díis cuirthear clú Laighean* (edited by Eoghan Ó Raghallaigh, ‘A poem to Aodh Buidhe and Alasdair Mac Domhnaill of Tinnakill, Queen’s County’, *Ossory, Laois and Leinster* 2 (2006) 44–64), and quatrains 1, 39 and 42 of the unpublished poem *Maith bhur bhfíor gcatha, a chlann Róigh*, which eulogizes Uaithne Ó Mórdha (see introduction). Noting Eleanor Knott’s interpretation of an occurrence of *clann Róigh* as referring to the ‘kings of the line of Rudhraighe’ (*TD* 28.19, note), I take *síol/clann/sliocht Róigh* as being loosely synonymous with *Síol Rudhraighe*.

6c *le Rudhraighe gur threabh Teamhair* More literally, ‘until Tara ploughed together with Rudhraighe’. In light of the fact that Rudhraighe does not appear to have yet been elected to the headship of his family, and that the imagery is of a firebrand *about* to burst forth, the sense is that the notional ‘yoking’ or ‘binding’ of Tara to Rudhraighe has not yet happened. For the translation ‘devoted herself to’, see *DIL* s.v. *trebaid* (c).

6d *bean thurbhaidhe* The noun *turbhaidh* means ‘hindrance, prevention, interference, delay’ (*DIL* s.v. *turbaid* I (a)). Cf. *Créad an turbhaidh atá ort / gan teacht* ‘what is it that hinders thee from coming’ (*TD* 2.40). In a note on the latter, Eleanor Knott gives further examples of this word. Citing our couplet (from manuscript D), she describes the usage as ‘of a land bereft of its chief’ (*TD* II, 203). *DIL*, quoting Knott’s citation of our couplet, suggests the meaning ‘forbidden (?)’. I have been guided by this in my translation. Line *d* may be more literally rendered as ‘[Tara] was a woman forbidden to [other] men’.

7c *caor shlóigh* This expression commonly refers to a group of warriors (cf. 14c and 39b below).

7c *ó cheardchaibh na gcuradh* Literally, ‘from the forges of heroes’. For my rendering of ‘forges’ as ‘fields of battle’, compare such phrases as *ceardcha an áigh*, *ceardcha an chogaidh*, *ceardcha goile*, *ceardcha sleagh*.

7d *bhfóir nUladh* I take this as a reference to the Uí Mhórdha, whose Ulster roots are alluded to elsewhere in the poem (see note on 6b above).

8c *gé*: When followed by an adjective, as here, the more correct form is *giodh* according to *IGT* i.16.

8c *ceó* Normally, ‘mist’. For the sense here, compare: *Má do adhnas innte a-rís / splannc ar luighe ceo ar ghrís* ‘If I have kindled in them flame when dust had settled on embers’ (*Iomarbhágh* 14.19; in a note on *ceo*, the editor suggests reading ‘*ceoigh*, *ciach* or *ar an ng.*’ to give the correct syllable count for the line).

9ac The noun *sealg/seilg*, when followed by the genitive (as in 9a) or the preposition *ar* (as in 9c), can mean ‘seeking out’, ‘seeking to obtain’ etc. (see *DIL* s.v. *selg* (c) and *AiD* glossary). For the connotation ‘seeking [to rule]’, compare: *Ar seilg Banbha bíd Ultaigh, / ar a tí a-táid Connachtaigh* ‘The Ultaigh seek to rule Banbha, the Connachtaigh too’ (*AiD* 7.36ab).

9c *Eamhain* Eamhain Mhacha (Navan Fort, Co. Armagh) can figuratively represent Ulster (cf. *Maguire*, p. 287, *O’Reilly poems*, p.304, *L Bran*, p. 42). Again, this is a reference to the Uí Mhórdha’s ancestors who ruled in Ulster (see note on 6b).

10a *ag ráth Bhóinne* A reference to Tara.

11d *ceardcha na ríogh* Tara. Note the use of the same phrase to describe Cruacha in the following: *Do-cht[nn] ni lium-sa nach lean / go síghmadh Segsa fa sliabh / is Cruacha ceardcha na rígh / ’s na tuatha um rígh* [leg. *Síodh?*] *Neanta a-niar*, which I take to mean: ‘I used to see – I remember it well – as far west as the peaceful plain of Seaghais by the mountain, and Cruacha, the forge of kings, and the lands around Síodh (?) Neanta’ (*Do thuit aonchrann Inse Fáil*, RIA MS 1387 (23 O 78) p. 62, q. 5).

12a *ó ríoghraidh Eamhna* Another allusion to his royal Ulster roots (see notes on 9c and 6b) and thereby an assertion of his ancestral right to the kingship.

12cd More literally, ‘from its fire . . . it brings forth its flame’. I take *ceardcha* (line b) as the subject of *beiridh*. For the phrase *beiridh lasair* in the sense ‘lights up’, ‘ignites’, compare: *lasair dhearg i néallaibh nimhe / béaraidh th’fhearg* ‘thy anger will light up a red flame in the clouds’ (*Magauran* 11.10).

13b For *gabhaidh air* ‘undertakes’, compare: *Bíodh gurb ionmhuin leat Lughaidh / ná gabh ort feidhm ndoc(h)umhail* ‘Though Lughaidh be dear to you take not upon thyself a hard task’ (*Iomarbhágh* 22.28) and *gabh ort mo choimhéad is comhaill / ar roimhéad m’olc toghaim thú* ‘undertake and achieve my defence; owing to my many sins I flee to thee’ (*Dán Dé* 3.19).

16b *athaigh* Nominative singular *athach* ‘churl’. Brian Ó Cuív (‘A poem in praise of Ragnall, king of Man’, *Éigse* 8 (1956–7) 283–301: 300) notes that *athach*, a by-form of *aitheach*, is condemned as faulty in *IGT* ii.11. He states that the form *athach* is old and that its condemnation in the grammatical tracts may postdate the period of composition of the poem in which his example occurred (early 13th century). Note that D reads *aithigh*.

16cd Alternatively, ‘the slaying of the royal blood by an enemy [would], in short, have been [bad] enough’, the implication being that the deed is all the more grievous when carried out by vassals.

17a *Fiacha Fionnfholaídh* Note that *Fionnfholaídh* occurs also without *-fh-* and also with broad final consonant (as in D). In expanding N’s final syllable as *-aidh*, I have been guided by metrically-fixed examples in *DiD* 84 (25b, 29b, 38b), *Magauran* 4.33b and in the following quatrain: *Tainicc a-rís rogha ban / go Fódhla a hinis Alban / slat abhla ó tathoibh Monaidh / tarla d’Fiachaid Fionnfholaídh (Mealladh iomlaoide ar Éirinn, RIA 2 (23 F 16) p. 42, q. 10)*. For forms occurring in early texts, see T. F. O’Rahilly, *Early Irish history and mythology* (Dublin 1946) 154 ff., and Ralph O’Connor, ‘Searching for the moral in *Bruiden Meic Da Réo*’, *Ériu* 56 (2006) 117–143.

18a *Fhéilim mac Conraigh* Note that *Fhéilim*, lenited as direct object of a verb, alliterates with *ann*. We could, alternatively, read *Éilim*, which is the reading in D. The spelling *Éilim* is metrically fixed in *Magauran* 4.33a and is also the form used in *DiD* 84 (27c, 28d and 33c). Furthermore, initial *F-* does not occur in texts from the pre-classical period. However, the spelling *Féilim* does occur elsewhere (e.g. *GB* 7.14 and 17.18) and it may be that the poets felt at liberty to use either *Éilim* or *Féilim*. I should note, however, that I have no metrically-fixed example at hand for the latter spelling. Cf. also the note on 30d below. As for the patronymic, the spelling with *-aigh* occurs here and in 23b. Although I have again let N’s reading stand, it should be noted that D reads *-ach*, which, as well as being the form occurring in earlier texts, is also backed up by a metrically-fixed example in *DiD* 84.33.

18cd (i) I have followed D here in reading *an sgéal* where N has *as sgél*. For *do-gheibh* in the sense ‘tells’, cf. *DIL* s.v. *fo-gaib*, col. 228.35–41, where two examples of forms of the early verb *ad-fét* ‘tells’ being replaced by those of *fo-gaib* ‘finds, gets’ are quoted from the Early Modern Irish redaction of the Táin: *nach misi rodusfuighbhe ... duib í* and *nach badh eisin radus fuighbhedh duibh í*. The accompanying comment in *DIL* reads: ‘the modern redactor has replaced *adféta* by a form [of the verb *fo-gaib*] beginning with *f* which gives approximate sense: *will find (the information) for you*. The sense *imparts, communicates* is not supported by other examples.’ The present couplet would seem to be just such an example (*do-ghéabh ... an sgéal*). As would the following: *Iomdha sgéal maith ar Mhuire / fá moltar a míorbhuile / do ghéabh ar an óigh n-iodhain / sgéal as chóir do chreideamhain* ‘Many the good tale of Mary, in which her wonders are extolled. I will tell of the pure maid a tale worthy of credit’ (*AÓD* 48.1). If, alternatively, we read *is sgéal* (cf. N), the object of *do-ghéabh* would be unexpressed and the overall sense would be more stilted: ‘I will get [it] from the line that is followed; it is a true story that we are told’. (ii) For *leanaidh*, compare: *Síol Suibhne na dtachar dte / mar bhíos ’n-a bheartaibh féile / dá dteinnleanmhain ní treoir ghearr / i seinleabhraibh eoil Éireann* ‘It is no short task to trace through old books of Eire’s lore how Suibhne’s hot-battling stock is ever doing marvels of generosity’ (*DiD* 102.15 = *Irish monthly* 56, 35).

19c *Luighdheach* Nom. *Lughaidh*. The allusion is perhaps to the legendary king *Lughaidh Riabh nDearg* (alias *Riabhdhearg*) who is listed as an ancestor of *Fiacha Fionnfholaídh* (see *Corp. Gen. Hib.* s.n. *Fiachu Findfholaídh*). Generally, in phrases such as *inis Luighdheach* (i.e. Ireland) or *ráth Lughaidh* (i.e. Tara), the reference can be to one

of a number of legendary personages of this name, the best known being Lughaidh Mac Con. Cf. 21b and 32a.

21b *in is Luighdheach* A poetic name for Ireland. See note on 19c.

22a *A gcroinn abhla* As *abhla* is the genitive singular of *abhall* 'apple-tree', one might consider *gcroinn* to be superfluous here ('their apple-tree trees'). However, the following examples indicate that the present usage is the norm: *nír thráth dá mbuing don Bhanbha / croind abhla ar chách fá chomhdha* 'it was not a time to snatch them from Ireland, apple-trees which were everyone's support' (*Maguire* 24.23cd); *croinn abhla ar lár ag luighe / fá chlár mBanbha um bhealltuine* (*LCAB* 9.31cd); *Beag dteasda gaoil dá ghoire / tre shíol gCuinn Chláir Iughoine / 's mar tharra do chaomhchoill Chéin / na saorchroind abhla ó éinfréimh* 'Cian's fair race, those noble fruit-trees springing from the same seed (as Conn's race) – a poor proof of kin-love spite of their kinship is their present state, a state brought about by the race of Conn of Iughoine's Plain' (*O'Hara* 29.6); and *dlighidh donn-coill Banba Breg / lomcroinn abhla gan earradh (Earradh cumhadh um Cruachain*, Book of O'Conor Don, 281a, q. 29cd). The expression *crann/croinn ubhall* (cf. Modern *crann úll*) does not seem to occur.

23a I have removed the possessive *a* which occurs before *mháthair* in both N and D in order to reduce the syllable count to the requisite eight. For omission of the possessive, compare: *saor an fear ré bhfuilid chois* 'is duine saor é an fear a bhfuil siad lena chois', *as tú an fear ó dtánag mhnáoi* 'is tú an fear a dtáinig mé óna bhean' (examples taken from *SNG*, 423–4).

23b *ar gcor a n-áir* Cf. *far cuireadh ár na n-Ultach* 'when the Ulaidh were slain around it' (*Magauran* 4.32).

25b *fiche bliadhain* More correctly, *fiche bliadhán* (see *IGT* ii.10). As the nominative singular and genitive plural were formally identical in many words, the former began to be used instead of the latter in cases such as the present example. The practice is faulted in *BST* 237.14–15; however, there are many examples where it fixed by metre (see *SNG*, 427, and *O'Hara* 1302n.).

25cd I take *fiche bliadhain* (line *b*) as the antecedent of *ann* (line *d*), i.e. *nach rugadh ... ann* 'in which [twenty years] ... was not taken'. I take the verb in *ar líon d'oirbheart* to be intransitive: 'what filled with prowess', i.e. 'the extent of prowess [among others]'.  
26a *bhFiachaidh* The nominative form *Fiacha* occurs in 17a. For the various forms of this name in *IGT* i.87 and ii.112.

26d *le néall nuaidhe* This phrase occurs also in *O'Hara* 1A.25b, where McKenna translates it as 'impelled by a new vision'.

27d *gcrois* According to *DIL*, s.v. *crois* (c), the word *crois* can be used 'of various cross-shaped objects'. Apart from the present instance, I have no other example where *crois* denotes a 'mast' except, perhaps, in the first-line *Crann seóil na cruinne an Chroch Naomh* 'The holy cross is the mast of the world' (*RIA MS 1* (23 D 14) 87).

28c *d'agra fhaladh ar fonn bhFéilim* Literally, 'to avenge a grievance on/against the land of Féilim'. The phrase *agra ar* means 'avenging on' (see *DIL* s.v. and *Maguire* glossary), and *fola ar* can mean 'resentment against'. Cf. *Fearfaid luibhe gach leirge / deora fola foirdheirge / fachain na fola duinne / fola ón Athair oruinne* 'Plants on every hill will

weep red tears of blood; the cause of the red blood will be the Father's wrath with us' (*Pilib Bocht* 25.11).

28c Terms like *fonn Féilim* commonly denote Ireland.

29c *fíor bhflatha* The ancient notion of the 'ruler's truth/justice' (earlier *fír flaitheomon*), is central to kingship ideology in early Ireland. As Fergus Kelly puts it: 'If the king is just, his reign will be peaceful and prosperous, whereas if he is guilty of injustice ... the soil and the elements will rebel against him. There will be infertility of women and cattle, crop-failure, dearth of fish, defeat in battle, plagues, lightning, etc.' (*A guide to early Irish law* (Dublin 1988) 18). Cf. line 17c.

30d *Fhéilim* Although this is the subject of a passive verb it is being treated as an accusative, as indicated by the lenition, which is fixed by alliteration with *ann*. Unless, of course, we read *Éilim* (see note on 18a). For lenition after a passive verb, compare: *Dreach céille 'má n-ibhthear fhíon* (*Butler* 13.21). This example occurs in a seventeenth-century poem. Perhaps the earlier date of our poem is an argument for emending to *Éilim*.

31b *lér théigh sí* More literally, 'with whom she warmed'. As well as capturing the sense of 'warming the hearth' of Tara which runs through the poem, the idea of 'warming with' could conceivably also mean 'mates with'. Though this usage is not noted in *DIL*, compare: *Rí dh'ibh Neill gan chur 'na cheand / crand díona d'uaislibh Éireann / rí gan chairt ler théigh Teamhair / do réir Airt ar (e)a[i]rrdheanaibh (Táinig anam i nÉirinn, RIA MS 2 (23 F 16), p. 85, q. 24) and Ni fuighter da fhréimh roimhe / súas ó Áodh go hIughoine / fir lér théigh an tír-si Chuinn / céim is isle na [a] n-abrúim (Ní mhaireann d'Éirinn acht Aodh, RIA 540 (C iv 1) 157v, q. 27). An alternative would be to emend to *rer* (*téigid re* is defined in *DIL* as 'warms to, grows fond of') but this does not seem necessary.*

32a I have taken 'the land of Lughaidh' here to be a poetic name for Ireland (see note on 19c). If, however, what is meant is 'the land of Lughaidh Laoighseach', then the reference is to the territory of the Uí Mhórdha. The eponymous ancestor of the Laois, of whom the O'Mores were a sept, was Lughaidh Laoighseach (synonymous with, but sometimes recorded as a son of, Laoi(gh)seach Ceanmhór (or Leannmhór) son of Conall Cearnach; see *Corp. Gen. Hib.* s.n. *Loíchsi*, and *LGen.* 1302.3 ff.; see also note on 38b). However, as Rudhraighe is being considered as spouse of Tara in the present instance, it seems appropriate to regard the context of his *bearta coimhéada* as broader than the territory of Laois.

33ab Twenty-five is the number of kings of Tara assigned by the genealogists to the *Ulaid* (see *Corp. Gen. Hib.*, p. 274), who may be equated with *fine Róigh* (see note on 6b). Note the same allusion in the following examples: *Cóigear ar fhichid uile / ó ír san Réim Ríoghraidhe / oiread ré dhá n-urdail soin / fuairsead do théarma ar Theamhraigh* 'In all, twenty-five descendants of Ir in the List of Kings had their term in Teamhair – a number worth twice their number!' (*Iomarbhágh* 28.37); *Do ghabh asum Teagh Dá Thí / cúigear ar fhichid airdrí, / do Chloinn ghuaisbheithrigh réidh Róigh, / céim le n-uaislighthir m'onóir* 'From me five-and-twenty kings of Róich's valiant, generous race seized the Dwelling of Dá thí, thereby my dignity is ennobled' (*TD* 28.19); *Tarla díobh-sain suaithnedh linn / cúig rígh fhithchiod ós (ós) Éirinn / múr Teamhrach fan tslatchoil shean / ó dhá[gh]chloinn mherdha Mhíleadh (Ó cheathrar gluaisid Gaoidhil, RIA 11 (E iv 3), p. 49, q. 57); Fúthaibh*

*dob áille an Fhódlá / fithche cuinge corónda / díobh ós a cionn so is cóig rígh / óig san innsi dob urrigh(e)* (*Fan ráith imrid aicme Ír*, RIA 11 (E iv 3) 59a, q. 6).

33b *ráinig sinn* For the translation 'I count', compare *seacht cubait riged ránac*, 'seven cubits of the forearm I counted' (Edward Gwynn, *The Metrical Dindshenchas* iii, 1913, 258.27). The editor's note (p. 524) reads: '*ránac*: literally 'I reached, I found'.'

35c *múr Té do chabhair ní cheileabh* I take this line literally as, 'I will not conceal Té's rampart [i.e. Tara] from [its] saving'. For *ní cheileabh*, cf. *tart an chúigir ní cheileabh* 'I shall not be silent about the thirst of the five' (*O'Reilly poems* 7.22b) and such phrases as *lúad nád céil* 'I shall declare it plainly' (see *DIL*, s.v. *ceilid*).

35d *Danair* Originally meaning 'Danes', this can be used, like *Goill*, to refer to either the Anglo-Normans or the English. I take it to refer to the latter here.

36c *teine mhall* I have no other example of the use of *mhall* with reference to a fire. It appears to refer to the fire's former 'inert' or 'dormant' state.

36cd The sense seems to be that Ireland's hearth has been dormant, or sleeping, under some sort of 'enchantment' while it waited for a great leader. Note the use of *draoidheacht* in the following: *Gluaisid forglá bhfear ndomhain / fan nGréig n-éachtaigh n-iorghalaigh, / gur bhean siad a draoidheacht dí / do-niad i n-aoinfheacht uirri* 'The flower of the men of the world march on warlike, valiant Greece, making upon her simultaneously, so that they deprived her of her magic (protection)' (*TD* 13.25). The meaning of *draoidheacht* here may equate with the idea of *féagh fia(gh)*, which occurs in the poem just cited and which Knott explains as 'some kind of enchantment by which persons or objects could be rendered invisible' and which may also imply 'protective disguise, camouflage' (note on *TD* 13.13).

37a *dáil a crithear* Literally, 'the distributing of its sparks/spurts of flame'. *Dáil* is defined by *DIL*, s.v. 4 *dál*, as 'a distributing, dispensing, bestowing, granting'. It is normally used with reference to the distribution of gifts, drink or food, the shedding of tears or blood, as well as of the firing of spears, etc. The following quatrain, however, contains a usage that may be compared with our example: *Teas ag gabháil a ngealbhas, / a slegha ag dáil drithlennfhras, / grís ag gabháil ghruadh ndeirgéal / 'gun tsluagh d'anáil óirmheirgeadh* '... their spears discharge showers of sparks [on impact] ...' (*LCAB* 8.50).

37d *leathtrom* I have no other example of this word in the sense apparently meant here, 'unbalanced', 'staggering', etc.

38–41 Attention is drawn here to Rudhraighe's illustrious ancestor, Laoiseach Leannmhór son of Conall Cearnach (alias Laoi(gh)seach Ceannmhór/Lannmhór, whose coming to power in Laois and exertion of control over Leinster is recalled. That this was his right is asserted in quatrain 40 by reference to a prophecy attributed to Cathbhaidh, druid of Conchobhar mac Neasa of the Ulster Cycle. (Cathbhaidh is associated with prophecy in a number of texts, most notably in *Longas mac nUislenn* and related texts, in which he foretells Deirdriu's birth and the tragedy she will bring.) The story of how the king of Leinster rewarded Laoiseach with the land of Laois for having helped the Leinstermen against the men of Munster is told in the poem *Maith bhur bhfíor gcatha, a chlann Róigh*, qq. 11–18 (see introduction).

38a *crích Laoisigh* The 'land of Laoiseach Leannmhór', i.e. the territory of Laois.



38b *Laoiseach Leannmhór* The reading in G seems best here. N's *laoisigh* is perhaps an inadvertent scribal repetition of the preceding word (the final of 38a).

38c *seóltar é 's a ealta mhíleadh* Translation tentative.

39c *gan chor sligheadh* The sense of *cor* here is 'twist', 'detour' (see *DIL* s.v. *cor* 9). Cf. *dol lem shúil gé do shireadh / cor sligheadh dhúinn a dheireadh* 'though it sought to please me, its end was ever my misleading' (*Pilib Bocht* 3.25); *do chliaraibh ní cor sligheadh* 'is no check to the march of poets' (*Failghigh chosnas clú Laighean* 30b, edited by L. McKenna, 'Some Irish bardic poems lxxxix', *Studies* 38 (1949) 57–62).

40b *Cathbhaidh* The earlier form of this name is *Cathbad*. On expanding the suspension to a syllable ending in a slender *dh*, see *IGT* ii.111 and 198. I have emended *-f-*, which reflects pronunciation (see *SNG*, 351), to historical *-bh-*.

40c *damhraidh chláir na gcuradh* The same phrase occurs in a poem by Tadhg Óg hUiginn and is translated by McKenna as 'the troops of the Field of Heroes (Éire)' (*AiD* 15.19). The present instance is presumably a reference to the Ulstermen, ancestors of the Uí Mhórdha.

41c For internal rhyme with *diall* in the next line I have emended *raon* to *rian*, with which it is synonymous; cf. the following: *réighidh a Rí an rian roimhe / go tí fá fhiadh Iughoine* (*Coisrigh, a Chríost, cairbh Dhonnchaidh*, *RIA* 3 (23 L 17), 12b, q. 2).

42b *ag gabháil tort* I have no other example of the expression *gabhadh tar* and tentatively take it to mean the same as *téid tar* in the sense 'becomes necessary for', 'becomes due' (*DIL* s.v. *téit*, col. 138.8). Thus, I understand the line to mean, 'the land of the Gaoidhil falls due to you', or perhaps, '[the saving of] the land of the Gaoidhil is resting on you' (the translation 'depends on you' being a loose rendering of this). Cf. the following examples: *Mithid mo chosg do chiontaibh, / do-chuaidh thort mo tháirriochtain* (*DiD* 11.23; glossed by McKenna as 'tá de dhualgas anois ort', *DiD*, p. 433); *mo locht as a truail tugadh, / do-chuaidh thort mo theasrugadh* (*DiD* 52.39; glossed as 'is é t'uaín-se anois cabhrughadh liom' *DiD*, p. 449).

42c *creach ... le* (i) The term *creach* is used to describe a territory also in the poem *Creach ag Luighne ó Leith Mhogha* (= *O'Hara* 13), regarding which McKenna notes: 'Throughout this poem the settlement made in Connachta by Tadhg son of Cian, ancestor of Í Eadhra, is represented as a *creach*' (*O'Hara*, p. 387). (ii) On the use of the preposition *le*, compare: *creach le cleith Lothra a loingsibh / mochbha ag breith sna báduibhsin* 'the creach borne off by Lothra's hero, cows prematurely calving in the ships' (*BST* 211.2).

42d *cóir ormhór a fhaladh ort* Cf. *cóir a fhala ar oighir Céin* 'justly is Cian's heir angry at [it]' (*O'Hara* 19.19a). On the use of the word *fola* 'grievance' etc., McKenna notes: '*Fola* may have a subjective genitive (or possessive adjective) denoting the person who feels the anger or gives the offence ... or it may have an objective genitive (or possessive adjective) giving the object, cause (person or thing) of the anger. ... When used by itself, *fola* generally means "anger, etc."' (*O'Hara* 2003n.).

43ac The question posed is rhetorical and I translate somewhat loosely. Cf. *Cosmhail re lon, a fhlaith Éile, / an t-abhra cóir – cia ar nar loisg?* 'O prince of Éile, like to a blackbird's is thy shapely eye, lighting up with love of all' (*AiD* 26.33ab) and *Cia an t-éinrí áirimhthear lionn / nár ghabh airdcheannas Éirionn, / ó Cholla go Gaoidheal nGlas, / más laoidheadh orra an t-eólas?* 'Do we count a single king, from Colla back to Gaedheal Glas,

who did not seize the headship of Ireland, if that knowledge prove an exhortation to them?' (TD 24.39). Cf. also qq. 46, 50 and 51.

43a *lucht an iomthnúidh* Literally meaning 'the envious ones' but denoting 'rivals'. Cf. *Fiodh ag tabhoirt umhla d'úir / - mór labhras lucht an iomthnúidh - / claon abhla fa Fhiadh nÉirne / tarlla ciall 'sa choimhéirghe* 'The wood bends down to the ground, the envious have much to say; apple trees are bent in the land of the Erne – this is the sense of the uprising' (Maguire 14.24) and *Dábhur loit do léigeadh fúibh / do lámhach lucht an iomthnúidh, / ó[s] sibh cinn chaomhna an chóigidh, / rinn gach aongha urchóidigh* 'Since you are the protecting heads of the province, the point of every harmful spear was loosed against you for your destruction by the casting of the envious ones' (*Gearr bhur ccuairt, a chlanna Néill*, q. 6, edited by B. Ó Cuív, 'A poem on the Í Néill', *Celtica* 2 (1952–4) 245–51).

43b *gCaithír* Namely, Cathaoir Mór, legendary ancestral king of the Leinstermen. On the form, see note on 45cd.

44ab *Lorga*-alliteration is absent here. The triple alliteration in both lines is perhaps meant to compensate for this (cf. D. McManus, 'Miscellanea on Bardic poetry: metre, language and style', *Ériu* 55 (2005) 147–66: 147–9). An alternative would be to emend *an mír* to *ainmhír*, but this seems unlikely.

44d *fhior shealbha* Compare *fer sealbha gach saorchineoil* 'the overlord of every noble people' (Maguire 20.1e).

44d *críche Cuinn* A poetic name for Ireland ('the land of Conn Ceadchathach').

45b *linn duas* That this 'flood of gifts' is probably meant for poets is reflected in the description *tonn oinigh nár fhíll ó sgoil* (47b). For figurative uses of *li(o)nn* 'pool', 'lake', 'body of water or liquid in general', see *DIL* s.v. 1 *linn* (c), and cf. *Ní thibhre sí gidh soirbh éigeas / inghean Domhnaill acht duas lán, / croidhe as lomnán do linn oinigh / len binn comhrádh doiligh dhámh* 'Domhnall's daughter gives naught but overflowing reward to a poet even though he be easily satisfied (?); her heart overflows with generosity and loves the difficult language of the poets' (AiD 31.40) and *Fríoth lé luach a hainliamhna / an ghéag go gcnuas choillrtoghda; / téid lionn bádha bainrtoghna / ós chionn trágha a throimdhíoghla* 'The queen, a branch bearing royal hazel-nuts, got the full value of her espousals; the flood of her love swept over the shore of God's dread vengeance' (AiD 60.4).

45c The emendation to *gcumhngaighe* is for rhyme with *Rudhraighe*. For the by-forms *cumh(n)gaighidh/cuimh(n)gighidh* ('constricts', 'confines', etc.), see *IGT* iii.106, and *DIL*, s.v. *cumgaigid*.

45cd *gCaithír ... thaithír* The normal and historic spelling of these two words is *Cathaoir* and *tathaoir*. As well as appearing elsewhere in the Nugent Manuscript (*Dá néall orchra ós iath Uisnigh*, 42r, qq. 9 and 32), the form *Caithír* occurs with metrical support in the 17th-century 'Tinnakill Duanaire' and the Book of O'Conor Don (see Ó Raghallaigh, 'A poem to Aodh Buidhe and Alasdair Mac Domhnaill', 7c n.). It also occurs in the 16th(?) -century 'Seithfín Duanaire': *A gael sud in (?) soileimthi / a ghael re cru in Caithír-si / cían ummat is inairme / tríath Muman a macaim-si* (*Fiú a cúigeadh críoch Osraighe*, TCD MS 1263 (H.4.22) st. 7). As for *taithír*, the only other bardic example I have found is in the above-mentioned *Dá néall orchra ós iath Uisnigh*, rhyming with *Caithír* (q. 32). Outside of bardic poetry I know of only one example, which occurs in 'O'Davoren's

glossary', edited from the 16th-century manuscript Egerton 88 (British Library): *Tairim.i. taithír; ut est ní tairim cluas clothach n-ergna.i. nochta taithirim eistecht na cluaisi cluines in etargna*, which the editor renders as: 'tairim, i.e. blame (?), ut est 'I blame (?) not a famous ear of learning', i.e. I do not blame the hearing of the ear that hearkens to intellect.' (W. Stokes (ed.). 'O'Davoren's glossary', *Archiv für celtische Lexikographie* 2 (1904) 197–504, § 1518).

46a Compare the use of *cuisle de* in the following: *Leat achd munab lór a fuil / a mhic Dé i ndíol mo pheacaidh / cuirse ar a deoraibh a díol / cuisle d'fheolfhuil an airdríogh* 'If, O Son of God, Thou thinkest that her blood requites not my sin, add to its drops the stream of the Lord's blood' (*Pilib Bocht* 14.24) and *Braon d'fuil Colla na ccolg ngreanta / geg d'Ibh Conuill cosnus gliaidh / firsreabh don fhuil-si Neill naraigh / cuisle do freimh badhaigh Briain (Beag mhaireas do mhacraidh Ghaoidheal, RIA MS 90 (24 P 12), p. 140, q. 39).*

46a *Chearbhaill* This must refer to Rudhraighe's maternal lineage. The Uí Chearbhaill (O'Carrolls) territory of Éile lay west of the lands of the Uí Mhórdha.

47cd I do not understand this couplet. For *cnú órdha* 'golden trinket', see Ó Raghallaigh, 'A poem to Aodh Buidhe and Alasdair Mac Domhnaill', 36cd n.

49c The second occurrence of *bláth* (see manuscript readings) has no rhyming partner. I take it as a case of dittography and tentatively emend to *nó*, which occurs in the next line.

50a *ortha* The occurrence in the late language of the form *órtha* (cf. MSS) is noted in *DIL*, s.v. *ortha*. For *orthalartha*, see *IGT* ii.8.

50c *bhfoighéig bhfáinne* (i) I understand this literally as 'a small circular branch', and have translated it as 'a ring', but it might alternatively mean 'a bracelet' or the like (cf. *an tslat fháinne* 'the round brooch', *AiD* 6.26). (ii) Note that the expected lenition of *fáinne* following a dative is not an option as alliteration would be lost. Eclipsis rather than lenition following a noun governed by the preposition *go n-* is common (cf. *Magauran* 1010n.). For analogical eclipsis in Middle Irish, see *SNG*, 239.

50d *dár choimhéid* Slender *-d* is fixed by rhyme here with *bhfoighéig*, thus implying the existence of a by-form *coimhéididh* for the verb *coimhéadaidh* 'keeps, guards, watches'. Instances of slender *-d* are rare, but do occur, e.g. 2 sg. impv. *coimhéid* in *DBM* 12.67 and 14.3, and *O'Hara* 3159; cf. also preterite *do choimhéid* in *TriBB* 1514, 3272, 3592.

51d *féigin* For internal rhyme with *éidir* I have emended N's *féachain* to *féigin*. This form, however, is marked as *lochtach* in *IGT* iii.93. No verse citation is provided there to illustrate the form. The present (emended) instance, however, brings to two the number of examples of *féigin* I have come across in verse. The other is in a poem by Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn: [*Ní lamham*] *biodhbha, a bharr thioch, / do theacht chugainn dá gcluintear; / an chríoch fhionnsa ón héigin troigh – / a ciomhsa d'fhéigin d'ardaibh* 'If thy coming to us be heard of, O clustering locks, foeman [will not dare] to look from on high at the borders of this fair country from which one must go' (*TD* 41.18).