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 Úi Mhórdha (O’Mores) of Laois.1 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 bhfior gcatha, a chlann Róigh, comprising sixty-three quatrains ascribed to Tuileagna Ó Maoil Chonáire in honour of Uaithne Ó Mórdha, slain by crown forces in 1600, belongs to the end of the century. It remains unpublished.2 To around mid-century belongs the poem Tnúth Laighean re Láimh gConaill, seemingly in praise of Conall Óg Ó Mórdha, killed by English forces in 1557.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.3 The poem edited below, Maoirtheach teine i dteallach Ghaoideheal, 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 Mhaoileachlainn (1523–1537), his uncle, Piars (1537–8), and his brother, Céadhach Ruadh (1538–42).4 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 Úi Mhórdha were now dealing more directly with the English administration instead of with the Kildares.

1For the fourteenth-century poems (Sloinneam cró cloinne Domnail and Dé mbeadh fear d’aimse ar d’airme eile) see Anne O’Sullivan, ‘The O’Moore poems in the Book of Leinster’, Celéca 8 (1968) 182-6.
2Copies of Maith bhur bhfior 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 accessional metre. Conall na ngliodh ndiaochrach agus Cú na gCeas and A shaolín chroidhe, litig díth do shaon go fóill, which have been edited by Liam P. Ó Murchú: ‘D’Uaithne Ó Mórdha a thit i gcath 176 Lúnas 1600’, in John Carey, Máire Herbert and Kevin Murray (ed.), Cín Chille Cúile. Texts, saints and places: essays in honour of Pádraig Ó Ráin (Aberystwyth, 2004) 334–53.
3The hand of Conall Ó Mórdha’; Professor Ó Macháin notes the possibility that the poem may have been for Conaill Óg’s father, Conaill (mac Mhaoileachlainn), who died in 1537.

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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, Céadaigh Ruadh and Giolla Pádraig, sided with the lord deputy. Further division followed the replacement of Piaras by Céadaigh Ruadh as chief in late 1538: Rudhraighe remained close to Céadaigh Ruadh while Giolla Pádraig allied himself with Ó Conchubhair Fhailge. 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. 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).

Rudhraighe is mentioned in the poem by first name (quatrain 34, 36 and 37) and 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 Gaoidhiil’s hearth’. This may be understood as a reference to Tara and to the notion but symbolically important high-kingship centre 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


2Rudhraighe Caoch’s submission to the crown is published in J. S. Brewer and William Bulleen, Calendar of the Carew Manuscripts preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth, 1515–1574 (London 1867) 185–6.

3O’Byrne, War, politics and the Irish of Leinster, 172–3.
fitting time to be unleashed’ (q. 5). Furthermore, in quatrains 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 Teachtmar. The high-king, Fiacha Fionnfholaith, is slain by the vassal-tribes of Ireland and replaced by Féliim mac Conraigh, under whose rule nature fails to prosper. The nobles are all massacred by the vassals, except for one, Tuathal Teachtmar, 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 Féliim, and takes the kingship. Having told the story, the poet makes his purpose plain by expressly comparing Rudhraighe Ó Mórdha to Tuathal Teachtmar. 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 quatrains 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 when 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 of the hegemony of the Kildare FitzGeralds a short number of years before Rudhraighe’s rise to the chieftainship.

Tuathal Teachtmar 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.

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, Fedach Fein Fechtach, plays the part of Tuathal Teachtmar. 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 Meic Du Réo’, Érin 56 (2006) 117–143. The version of the story told in the present poem conveys with that recounted, or alluded to, in other bardic poems from the Early Modern period; see Liam P. Ó Caithlín, Apóilga na bhfíl 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 Rudhraige’s illustrious ancestor Laoisach Leannmhóir, son of Conall Cearnach, who, according to tradition, came from Ulster and settled in Laois; and in quatrains 44, we are told that Rudhraige 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 Rathcomrath, Co. Westmeath, up until the Cromwellian confiscations. He and one Aibhilin (inghean Chathchaor), presumably his wife, are subjects of the unpublished elegy Dá néallorchra ós iath Uisnigh, by Diarmaid Ó Cobhthaigh. As Pádraig Breathnach states, 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 dáin’. Internal evidence in Dá néallorchra 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: Failghighchosanas clá Luighean, composed for Brian (mac Cathaoir) Ó Conchobhair Fhialghe (d. 1560) and a religious poem, Fada cuimhnightheartóir Leinbh.

**Manuscript Sources**

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

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


13Chief Precentor of Ireland and Scotland in poetry’ (John O’Donovan (ed.), *Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters from the earliest period to the year 1615* 1–VII (2nd ed., Dublin 1856) V, 1536 (s.a. 1554).)


15*RIA MS* 1 (23 D 14), p. 54.

16See digital images at 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 Cabhthaigh 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’. It has previously been observed that D derives from N and that it may have been copied directly from it. 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 (dúinadh) forms part of the final quatrains, 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: udh N, úaidh D (: shl-uaigh) (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 (Fuigeall 2a; bhfuighbhbe 7a) and these are also metrically acceptable. Finally, there is variation between N and D with regard to the spelling of the names Fiacha Fiomfholaidh and Félim 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: ‘gothraidh fuinn ó dáladh: ní hdeadh acht eoghan mac aodh uí cobhtaigh’ (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 teitalach gh. et cetera’. Why he chose to write this extract from the poem is not apparent.

17Thomas F. O’Rahilly et al., Catalogue of Irish manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy I–XXVIII (Dublin 1926–70) 1.
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; i > i/o before a broad consonant (e.g. nír > ntor 31c); elé > eléí before a slender consonant (e.g. te ne > teine 1a; bhóllim > bhFóllim 28c); elé > eláéa before a broad consonant (e.g. ghaoidhel > Ghaoidheal 2a; bél > beál 3a); unstressed u(i) > a(i) (e.g. theallúigh > thealláigh 2a; leantúr > leantur); unstressed io > ea (e.g. ghaoidhíol > Ghaoidheal 1a); final -i > -e (e.g. teilighí > teilighe 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. doilládh < doillígh 23d; bhfhíollm > bhFhíollm 3c; hshiol > shiol 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 deducted 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 by forms of words in order to meet these metrical requirements. For example, in quatrains 14, I emend gabhradh to gabhar for aicill-rhyme with nDanar.

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

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Eoghan mac Aodha Í Chobhthaigh ceicinit

1. Mairidh teine i dtéallach Ghaoidheal; a goil Ía chách curfídhsí; ceiltear lé lasar gach teineadh; lasadh is é is deireadh df.

2. Fuidheal teineadh theallaigh Ghaoidheal géabhadh fós gé fadóidh mall; tús na teineadh ar-fís adhnaidh grís do dheireadh adhnaidh ann.

3. Caor bhrúthine re béal a teilgte i dtéallach Néill na Naoi nGlas fa ghort bhFloinn le hanáil n-uabhair; Goill ag gabháil uamhain as.

4. Annamh éinteine is fhéarr goradh; guais a lasda ar laochraidh Ghall; giddh bé fós dá goið do ghabhlaigh ní fhoil acht tós adhnaidh ann.

5. Crithean bheó do bhí san choigill do chrú Mórdha mairidh súd; teallach Gaoideal is sair óircheas sgoileadh uaidh don fhoilcheas úd.

1. Fire still burns in the hearth of the Gaoighil; 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 Gaoighil’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 Gaoighil’s hearth.
6 Dá hiarradh gér iomadta céile
ar chloinn Róigh do-rinne sé;
le Rudhraighe gur fhreasbh Teamhair
bean thuimbhaide d'fhearaibh f.

7 Gearr go bhfuigea a fhadóidh,
d'fhios an teallaigh tiocfá sé
caor shléigh ó cheardchaibh na gcuradh,
deargaídh ré bhoír nUladh é.

8 Teine súd nár saoileadh d'fhadóidh;
dá hadlúadh feasda frith tráth;
gé fada an ceó do feith uirthe
a bhéith bhó do-chuiníne cáth.

9 Fa sheilg d'Teamhra n'fhráth moille;
mithidh do sheabhcaibh shif Róigh;
lór seanad ag seilg ar Eamhain;
leanad don cheird súileachair dóibh.

10 Súil re Rudhraighe ag ráth Bhóinne;
brosdadh air, ná hiarradh sé;
móide is báim d'fhearaibh a hiarradh;
Teamhair féin 'gá liamhain lé.

6. Though many a suitor sought Tara, she chose the seed of Róch; until she
deved 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 reden it before the Ulster host – a fiary 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 Róch'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 shluaimh shíl Mhórdha mac Conaill ná cuireadh uain uain deargtha ós ar ghníomh do-ghabhar; ceardcha na ríógh falamh fuair.

12 Rug Rudhraighe ó ríoghraídh Eamhna uain na ceardcha chosnas sé; dá teinidh mar budh tós lasaidh beiridh fós a lasair lé.

13 Teacht 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 fhuirghreas oighre Conaill is clann Róigh, caor shluaimh asa ngéilli nach gabhar, gan bhuain fa fhéin nDanar dóibh?

15 Sgéal oirdhearc nach uirsgeál diambhair ó dhraoiathibh Fódla fróth linn; tarla sé san rolla reampa, is é orra a ractha 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 Conaill’s heir and the descendants of Róch – 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. 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 Fionnfholaideh, 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 Félim 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. 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, Conrac’h’s son having slain them [all] apart from one son whose mother escaped with him.

24. Seized of such fear of Félim she departed from Ireland with her son; to protect him from Conrac’h’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 sfodh, 
    gluaisid ar sean n-uaire ar eachtra 
    le neall nuaidhe reactha an ríogh.

27  Tuathal Teachtmar fa hard aigneadh 
    do fhiafraigh, 's ní d' amhain tall, 
    'Caidhe a-nois an t-eol a hAlbain?' 
    Seol i gcrois do ardaigh ann.

28  An Tuathal úd, airdri Gaoidheal, 
    do gluaiseadh leis lión a shluaiigh; 
    d' agra fhaladh ar fonn bhFéilim 
    aghadh long ar Éirinn uaidh.

29  Ar mar Conraigh fá chríoch bhFódla 
    fógra catha cuiris uadh; 
    ar deachtar muir le fior bhflatha 
    do chuir a lión catha i gcuan.

30  San chath-soin do chuir fán ríghé 
    rug Tuathal ar deacht a-nall 
    a láimh bhiodhfhadh tar ais Éirinn 
    gur dionghadh 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 Teachtmar 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 chóir toirmearg, Tuathal Teachtmhar ír théigh sí, níor chór a lámh Tuathail Teachmhair, más dáigh nuachair d’fhearaibh í.

32. Bearta coimhcháda chlár Luighdheach ’na leith ó chách cuirthear súd; níor chleacht éinfeadh acht le hoirbheart déineamh na mbeart n-oirthearc úd.

33. Cóigeair réogh i réighe Éireann ar fhichid réogh raoinig sinn d’fhíne Róigh – is fuighle fíre – do-sóigh cuimhe an lín linn.

34. Teallach Gaoidheal géabhaideadh fhadóidh; idil ar Rudhraighe ó rug sé an teine ag teacht ar a haghaidh; tearc reimhe do an chaint é.

35. Mar rug Tuathal treise Banbha béaraideadh cuingidh cloinne Róigh; mur Té do chabhair ní cheileabh; Danair buidh é is deireadh dhoibh.

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 Róch – 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 Róch; I declare that Tara will be saved [by him]; he will be the downfall of the English.
36 Níor tás teine theallaigh Ghaoidheal a gobha féin go bhfuair sí; teine mháil do mhúidh i n-aoinfeacht, ann do chuir a draoidheacht dí.

37 Budh eagail dóibh dáí a críthear caor san teallach tarla beò; léigfidh d'anáil fa thoir n-eachtrann nár fhail féin dóibh leathrom leó.

38 Déarma curadh go créch Laoisigh, Laoiseach Leannmhór fa lán seóil, seóitar é's a eala mhléadh, sé reampa dob fhírtheart cóil.

39 Tig le hoighre Chonail Chearmaigh caor dheaghshluagh nach diúlt fa gleó, gan chur sligheadh don dáimh dhaighfhéar go tileadh chlár Laighean leó.

40 Tréan Laighean ar lorg a chéile, Cathbhaidh draoi do dheimhneach sé go mbia ag damhraídh chlár na gcúradh; do tharrghair 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 Cernach 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, cuinígíth Uladh,  
nó rigor dháimh, níor dhíult troid;  
féach gur réidhigh an rian reamhaibh;  
diall re a thréidhíth dleaghair doid.

42 Fada go bhfuair fear a cabhra;  
cróch Ghaoidheal ag gabháil tort;  
creach gan tóir le tromshléigh n'Danar,  
cór amhrór a fhadh ort.

43 Cia i Laighnibh do lucht an ionthnúinth,  
ar bhfuil gCaithir ní cuís rúin,  
nár tharáigh crú Conaill Chearnaigh?  
Cnú dá chrobháing dearbhaidh d'éinn.

44 Ní bheadh inléigthe ar uaim nÉireann  
an mór målla is móin fúann,  
Feóir is Bearbha na bhfiodh bhfíthe,  
ó fhíor shealbhna créiche Cuinn.

45 Gearr go racha ós riógraídh Laighean;  
a linn duas ag doil i mheid;  
guais dá gcumhlingaigh ar chrú gCaithir;  
chú 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 Gaidhil 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 Cathair’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 Cathair; Rudhraighe’s  
reputation is beyond reproach.
46. A proud stream of the noble blood of Cearbhail 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 Gaidhil 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 unredened by poets, or his fair hand and ring for which a paramour has kept her love.
EOGHAN Ó RAGHALLAIGH

51 Don ríoghairdh-se fhreimhe Conaill
cia an t-aoinneach dá airde sdair
budh éidir do char 'na chomaidh,
dá rabh féigín 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 hethd acht eoghan mac aodh ui cobhtuigh G. This is followed in G by quatrains 36–40; see below. 1a gáidheal D; 1d dhí D; 2a Fuigheall D; gáidheal D; 2b gúd D; 4a éntine D; sféir D; fe. N; 4c gibe D; 4d fuil ND; 5a beò N; bí N; ce. N; 5b tr. N; 7a bhfuighbhe D; fa. ND; 7d hē ND; 8c gē] omitted D; 8d cl. N; 9d ce. N; dl. D; dhóibh D; 10a ré ND; 11a shluigheadh D; 11c do gebhier N, do ghabtur D; 12c theinidh D; 12c mur bhudh N, mur b- D; 13b air] indistinct in N; 14a fu. D; 14c gáthtrur ND; 14d bu. N; 16b aithgh D; innsi ND; 16d gá D; dt. N, tt. D; doïbh N; 17a Fiachra fionnfholt- N; Fiach- fionnfholas D; 18a élim D; connhach D, conraigh N; 18d an] as N; 19b ar] omitted D; airdrí N, áirdrigh D; innsi ND; 19d ríogh] omitted D; 20c tharrla N, tárta D; 21b fá ND; 21c an] omitted D; fréimh ND; 21d a-fii] ris D; 22c dhús D; 23a éoladh D; mháthair] amháthair ND; 23b conraigh N, connhach D; gceur D; 24a connr- ND; 24c hoidhir N, heigher D; 24d élim D; 25a innsi ND; 25b fúthe D; tháll D; 26a ortha N; 26b sithe ND; 26d righ D; 27a fá ND; 27b tháll D; 28b les N; 28d aghaidh D; iadh N; 29a connr- ND; 29b uaidh ND; 29d ar cúan D; 30d dhí D; 31d díoigh ND; 32d dénamh N; 33b fhirchid 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; gáaidéal D; gaoiil G; 36b a gobha[ ãobha G; 36c tine G; anéinhecht G; 36d chur G; 37a chríthri D; chríthri G; 37b tealluidh G; 37c léigiodh G; 37d fhoilte ND; dh. G; 38a curuídh G; crioch laoisí G; 38b laoisígh N, laois- D; lonnmhór G, 38c 's a] sai G; ml. G; 38d riompa G; 39a cheumsidh G; 39b de. G; 39c slíthe G; deigher G; 39d tuluidh chlar G; 40b cathf- ND; cobhthuideadh G; 40c mbiaidh G; damhradh chlár G; gcúra G; 40d tharrngair ND; thairngair G; Udadh] oile G. In G, quatrain 40 is followed immediately to the right by: eccetera cum multis; below it appears the following: as an duan darab tosach: Maire tine a tealach .gh. et cetera. 41a cho. D; 41c raon ND; 41d duid N, doit D; 42a capra D; 42b thort D; 42d urmóir ND; 42d a fhaladhd] fhaladadh D; 43b ccaithfrí D; 43c ce. N; 43d dhá D; cr. N; dhúin D; 44a innleigthe N; 44d chr. D; 45c geumghuige ND; ccaithfrí D; 45d thatháoir D; 46b cru N; chonuill D; 46c bfile D; 46d dhá D; fu. N; 47c dhionunga] indistinct in N; 47d mhotha D; amoigh D; 48c br. N; chrú] only initial c visible in N; 49a ar an ngraiadh] ar gráideadh N; 49b inghin 'na féag] inghin(in) [. . .] a fégh [partly illegible] N, inghin na fégh D; 49c blath sga[th . . .] at] caor ina [partly illegible] N, bláth sghadh bláth cár na D; 50a ortha ghráide [lenition of g uncertain] N, órtha gráide D; 50b gr. N; sgoil D; 50d cóiméid N; bean] omitted D; toil ND; 51c chor N,
chur D. com. N, 51d fèachain N, fèighin D. Closure: Mairidh {remainder of line omitted} D; ghaoidhil {tenet of initial uncertain} N.

Notes

1–13 et passim With the imagery used in the opening quatrains (‘hearth’ etc.), compare: Nír bháithhí Thallach Íeachach / as úr gleannadh; and a lasar dhun nach dìomhaun; / trom a leanadh ‘The fire of green-valleyed Teallach Íeachach (“Eochaidh’s Hearth”) was never quenched; high its steady red blaze, plenteous its firing’ (Magauran 25.1); Ðà mbàithi éinioch Frìid Finn, / do-ghebhluaidh gràis san chochaidh ‘We’re the hospitality of Flann’s land brought down, an ember would be found in the ashes’ (LBrán 59, 21); and Acht u-thainn co mairenn dhiriile / gan dol acht [leg. as] da n-farsma s(i)ud / roisbus ces do glainfreíomh Ghaoidhail / reis saighnein san aoiábh úd // ‘Na gràis a coigcail clann Mhíilech / Mag Mathgamhna mairidh sé / d’ois na saoirsean d’èc re hain(à)d / creid acht aonrainn acaidh é / Beag mhaireas do mhacráidh 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.

The following abbreviations are employed here: 

terms such as *díbad* ‘extinguishing’ were used to connote the extinction of a family (see Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘Welsh *diffwdd*, *dífa* and Irish *do-bad* 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 ríad int aingil: inti ataifreas teinid sunn ríta cach, erbíid faith 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 *glo dh*, according to *IGT* i.16. Note that D reads *gidh*.

3c *le handil n-ubhair* 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. *andl*.

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 adhnaídh* Cf. *tás adhnaídh an éigse láin* ‘the first rays of that full moon’ (*AitD* 63.20).

6b *cloinn Róigh* According to Irish tradition, Fearghus mac Róigh and Connall Cearnach were both members of a group of families known as Síol Rudhraige who were descendants of *for* son of *Mid Easpáine*. The Uí Mhórdha traced their descent to Connall Cearnach (see, for example, *LGen.* 557.4 ff. and 1303.3 ff.). This is reflected in a number of allusions to Connall Cearnach in our poem (quatrain 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 Róch’, 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 dí 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 bhfior gcatha, a chlann Róigh*, which eulogizes Uaithne Ó Mórtha (see introduction). Noting Eleanor Knott’s interpretation of an occurrence of *clann Róigh* as referring to the ‘kings of the line of Rudhrighe’ (*TD* 28.19, note), I take *síoil/claí/ sclocht Róigh* as being loosely synonymous with Síol Rudhraige.

6c *le Rudhraighe gur threabh Teamhair* More literally, ‘until Tara ploughed together with Rudhraige’. In light of the fact that Rudhraige 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 Rudhraige has not yet happened. For the translation ‘devoted herself to’, see *DIL* s.v. *treibid* (c).

6d *bean thurbhaidhe* The noun *thurbhaidh* means ‘hindrance, prevention, interference, delay’ (*DIL* s.v. *turbaid* I (a)). Cf. *Créid an turbhaidh ad 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’.

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family (see Bulletin of g a fire, its be seen in rách, erbid entrust the el'. Éiriú l'Éige accoding to
'I was full L. s.v. andl. e since it is noon' (AitD)
onall Cear- who were to Conall i in a num-
ber. However, and 35b) as not directly If Mhórdha by Eoghan ill, Queen's d 42 of the 
Ois Uaithne occurrence of note), I take
ed together ve yet been our to burst has not yet "interference, that it is that lives further the usage our couplet, tion. Line d on'.

7c caor slióigh This expression commonly refers to a group of warriors (cf. 14c and 39b below).
7c ó cheardaibh na gcuradh Literally, 'from the forges of heroes'. For my rendering of 'forges' as 'fields of battle', compare such phrases as cearda an digh, cearda an choaidh, cearda goile, cearda sleagh.
7d bhfóir nUaidh 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 gè: When followed by a adjective, as here, the more correct for is giodh according to IGT i.16.
8c ceò Normally, 'mist'. For the sense here, compare: Méd do adhna innte a-rís / splann: ar luighe ceo ar guris 'If I have kindled in them flame when dust had settled on embers' (Lomarbhadh 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 sealig/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 AitD glossary. For the connotation 'seeking [to rule]', compare: Ar séilg Banbh bíd Ullaigh, / ar a tí-a-táid Connachtchagh 'The Uíthigh seek to rule Banbh, the Connachtchagh too' (AitD 7.36ab).
9c Eamhain Eamhaín Mhacha (Navan Fort, Co. Armagh) can figuratively represent Ulster (cf. Maguire, p. 287, O'Reilly poems. p.304, LBrand, p. 42). Again, this is a reference to the Uí Mhórdha's ancestors who ruled in Ulster (see note on 6b).
10a og ráth Bhóinne A reference to Tara.
11d cearda na riogh Tara. Note the use of the same phrase to describe Cruacha in the following: Do-ch[a]in llium-sa nach lean / go sghimhadh Séagtha fa sliabh / is Cruacha cearda na riogh / s na tuatha um riogh [leg. Siodh?] 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 Siodh (?) Neanta' (Do thuiu aoncharann Inse Fáil, RIA MS 1387 (23 O 78) p. 62. q. 5).
12a ó roghraidh 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.
12d More literally, 'from its fire . . . it brings forth its flame'. I take cearda (line b) as the subject of beiridh. For the phrase beiridh lasair in the sense 'lights up', 'ignites', compare: lasair dhearg i naillath nimhe / bieraidh th'fhearg 'thy anger will light up a red flame in the clouds' (Magauran 11.10).
13b For gabhaidh guair 'undertakes', compare: Biodh gurb iomhain leat Lugaidh / ná gabh ort feidhm ndoch (maguire) 'Though Lugaidh be dear to you take not upon yourself a hard task' (Lomarbhadh 22.28) and gabh ort mo choimhdeid is comhaill / ar roimh lead m'olc toghaim thu 'undertake and achieve my defence; owing to my many sins I flee to thee' (Dán De 3.19).
16b athaigh Nominative singular athach 'churl'. Brian Ó Cívít ('A poem in praise of Raghnnall, king of Man', Éigse 8 (1956–7) 283–301: 300) notes that athach, a by-form of aithneach, 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 [had] enough’, the implication being that the deed is all the more grievous when carried out by vassals.

17a Fíacha 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), Maighruan 4.33b and in the following quatrains: Tánioc a-rís rogha ban / go Fódhla a hínis Albain / slat abhla ó fathoibh Mónaidh / tarla d’ Fiachaid Fionnfholaídh (Mealladh iomadchad ar Éitín, 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’, Éiri 56 (2006) 117–143.

18a Fhéilim mac Conraigh Note that Fhéilim, is identified as direct object of a verb, alliterates with ann. We could, alternatively, read Eilim, which is the reading in D. The spelling Éilim is metrically fixed in Maighruan 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 sgéal. For do-geibh in the sense ‘teils’, cf. DIL s.v. fo-gaib, col. 228.35–41, where two examples of forms of the early verb ad-féit ‘teils’ being replaced by those of fo-gaib ‘finds, gets’ are quoted from the Early Modern Irish redaction of the Táin: nach misi roduisfúighbe ... dubh l and nach bádh eisin radus fuighbeadh dubh l. The accompanying comment in DIL reads: ‘the modern redactor has replaced adfáta 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-ghéabhb ... an sgéal). As would the following: lomhda sgéal maith ar Mhuire / fá molar a mbérlhile / do ghéabhb ar an rágh n-iodhain / sgéal as chóir do chrídeamhain ‘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-ghéabhb would be unexpressed and the overall sense would be more stilted: ‘I will get [it] from the lae that is followed; it is a true story that we are told’. (ii) For leanaidh, compare: Stól Suibhne na diachar dte / mar bhíos ’n-a hheartaibh féile / dá dieinleannmhain ní treoir ghearr / i seinnleabhráibh eòil Éireann ‘It is no short task to trace through old books of Eire’s lore how Suibhne’s hot-battling stock is ever doing nurture of generosity’ (DiD 102.15 = Irish monthly 56, 35).

19c Luighdieach Nom. Lughaidh. The allusion is perhaps to the legendary king Lughaidh Rádh nDearg (alias Riabhdearg) who is listed as an ancestor of Fiacha Fionnfholaídh (see Corp. Gen. Híb. s.n. Fiachu Fiondholaídh). Generally, in phrases such as inis Luighdieach (i.e. Ireland) or rath 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 inis Luighthedach A poetic name for Ireland. See note on 19c.

22a A gcroin ann bhala As bhala is the genitive singular of abhail 'apple-tree', one might consider gcroin to be superfluous here ('their apple-tree trees'). However, the following examples indicate that the present usage is the form: nír thráth dá mbuaing don Bhanbh / croind abhla ar chúcá fá chomhda 'it was not a time to snatch them from Ireland, apple-trees which were everyone's support' (Maguire 24.23cd); croin ann bhala ar lár ag luife / fá chlár mBanbh a bhaintime (LCA 9.31cd); Beag deasda goaíl dá ghoire / tré shiol gCuinn Chláir lughoíne / 's mar tharla do chaomhchoilli Chéin i na saorchoindi abhla ó éinfeiríomh '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 Lughoine's Plain' (O'Hara 29.6); and dlighidh dom-coinn Banna Breg Í / lómacróin ann bhala gan earradh (Earradh cumhadh um Cruachain, Book of O'Conor Don, 281a, q. 29cd). The expression crann/croin ann ubhall (cf. Modern crann súil) 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 tháinig mhadroi 'is tú an fear a dúinn mé óna bhean' (examples taken from SNG, 425–4).

23b ar gcorp a n-áir. Cf. far cuireadh ar an Uitche 'when the Ulaidh were slain around it' (Masculan 4.32).

25b fiche bluidhain More correctly, fiche bliadhain (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 is fixed by metre (see SNG, 427, and O'Hara 1002n.)

25c d I take fiche bliadhain (line b) as the antecedent of an (line d), i.e. nach ragadh . . . an in which [twenty years] . . . was not taken'. I take the verb in ar lón d'oirbeart to be intransitive: 'what filled with prowess', i.e. 'the extent of prowess [among others]'.

26a bhFeachaidh The nominative form Fiachta 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 sélóí na cruinne an Cruch Naomh 'The holy cross is the mast of the world' (RIA MS 1 (23 D 14) 87).

28c d'aigra fhualadh ar fonn bhFélim Literally, 'to avenge a grievance on/against the land of Félim'. The phrase agra ar means 'avenging on' (see DIL, s.v. and Maguire glossary), and fola ar can mean 'resentment against'. Cf. Fearfadh luibhe gach leirge / deora fola foidheirge / 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 Féillim commonly denote Ireland.

29c fior bhítheach The ancient notion of the 'ruler's truth/justice' (earlier fír flaithemon), 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 Féillim 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 Éillim (see note on 18a). For lenition after a passive verb, compare: Dreag céille 'ná n-ibhthear fion (Butler 13.21). This example occurs in a seventeenth-century poem. Perhaps the earlier date of our poem is an argument for emending to Éillim.

31b lér theigh sí More literally, 'with whom she warmed'. As well as capturing the sense of 'warning 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: Ri dh’ibh Neilí gan chur ‘na cheand / crand díona d’uaislibh Éireann / ri gan chaitir le théigh Teamhair / do réir Airt ar (e)g thriller (Túine anam i nÉirinn, RIA MS 2 (23 F 16), p. 85, q. 24) and Ní fuighier da fhreimh roimhe / súas ó Aodh go hluathcne / far lér théigh an tSr-si Chuinn / céim is isle na [a] n-abruim (Ní mháireann d’Éirinn acht Aodh, RIA 540 (CIV 1) 157v, q. 27). An alternative would be to emend to rer (tégid 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 Laoghaiseach', then the reference is to the territory of the Uí Mhórdhá. The eponymous ancestor of the Laois, of whom the O'Mores were a sept, was Lughaidh Laoghaiseach (synonymous with, but sometimes recorded as a son of, Laoi(gh)seach Ceannabhór (or Leannabhóir) son of Conall Cearnach; see Corp. Gen. Hib. s.n. Loíchsi, and LGen. 1302.3 ff.; see also note on 38b). However, as Rudhraige is being considered as spouse of Tara in the present instance, it seems appropriate to regard the context of his bearta coimhndada as broader than the territory of Laois.

33ab Twenty-five is the number of kings of Tara assigned by the genealogists to the Uílaíd (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: Cúigear ar fluchid uile / ó Ír san Réim Ríoghraide / o seoad ré dhá n-urdail sain / fuairsez do théarma ar Theaimhreagh 'In all, twenty-five descendants of Ír in the List of Kings had their term in Teamhair — a number worth twice their number!' (Tomasbhadh 28.37); Do ghabh asum Teagh Dá Thá / cúigear ar fluchid uairí, do Choillim ghnuaibhithir gheall Róigh, / céim le n-uaislímís m’onóir 'From me five-and-twenty kings of Róigh's valiant, generous race seized the Dwelling of Dá Thá, thereby my dignity is ennobled' (TD 28.19); Tarla diobh-sain suasnaíthlaidh lim / cúig rígh flúithchiodh ós (ós) Éirinn / mór Teamhrach fan tslatchoil shean / ó dhalghach Choillim mherdha Muileadh (Ó cheathruar gluaisid Gaoiðhil, RIA 11 (Ev 3), p. 49, q. 57); Fútharbh
dob áille an Phódla / fáthche cuinge cóirondá / díobh ós a cionn so is cóig righ / óig san
innís dob urrighe) (Fán ráth Írmrad aicme Ír, RIA 11 (E IV 3) 59a, q. 6).
33b réinig sinn For the translation 'I count', compare seaacht cubait riged ránán, 'seven
cubits of the forearm I counted' (Edward Gwynn, The Metrical Dindsenchas iii, 1913,
258.27). The editor’s note (p. 524) reads: ‘ránán: literally ‘I reached, I found’.
35c mair 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. tarr an chuíjir ní cheileabh
‘I shall not be silent about the thirst of the five’ (O’Reilly poems 7.22b) and such phrases
as lóid nád céil ‘I shall declare it plainly’ (see DIL, s.v. ceilid).
35d Danair Originally meaning ‘Danes’, this can be used, like Goioll, to refer to either
the Anglo-Normans or the English. I take it to refer to the latter here.
36c teine nhall I have no other example of the use of nhall with reference to a fire. It
appears to refer to the fire’s former ‘inert’ or ‘dormant’ state.
36d 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: Glaisid forli bhi’aor ndomhain / fan nGréig n-eachaigh n-iorghthaigh,
/ gar bhean siad a draoidheacht dl / do niad i n-aoinheacht 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 fa(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 críthear Literally, ‘the distributing of its sparks/spurts of flame’. Dáil is
defined by DIL, s.v. 4 dáil, 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: Tá agh gabbhál a ngealbhais / a slega ha a dáil
drithlemforas; / grá a gabbhál ghruidh dáirggeal / ’gnu tsluagh d’aonadh óirnimeagadh
‘... their spears discharge showers of sparks [on impact] ...’ (LCAB 8.50).
37d leathrom 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, Laoisceach Leann-
mhór son of Conall Cearnaigh (alias Laoi(g)seach Ceannamhó/Lannmhmhó, 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 Cathbhaiddh, druid of
Conchobhar mac Neasa of the Ulster Cycle. (Cathbhaiddh is associated with prophecy in a
number of texts, most notably in Longas mac nUislenn and related texts, in which he fore-
tells Deirdre’s birth and the tragedy she will bring.) The story of how the king of Leinster
rewarded Laoiskeach with the land of Laois for having helped the Leinstermen against the
men of Munster is told in the poem Maith bhur bhfior gcatha, a chlann Róig, qq. 11-18
(see introduction).
38a crích Laoisigh The ‘land of Laoiskeach Leannmhmhó’, i.e. the territory of Laois.

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38b Laoiseseach Leannmhréd 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 séoltar é 's a edaí mhíleadh Translation tentative.

39c gan chor slígheadh The sense of cor here is 'twist', 'detour' (see DIL s.v. cor 9). Cf. do lèim shuíl gè do shireadh / cor slígheadh dhíumin a dheireadh 'though it sought to please me, its end was ever my misleading' (Pilib Bocht 3.25); do chlíaraigh nó cor slígheadh 'is no check to the march of poets' (Failighigh chosnas clú Laighean 30b, edited by L. McKenna, 'Some Irish bardic poems lxxxix', Studies 38 (1949) 57–62).

40b Cathbhaideadh The earlier form of this name is Cathbadh. 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 SN, 351), to historical -bh-.

40c dánhraideadh dhúir na gcearteach The same phrase occurs in a poem by Tadhg Ó hÉiginn and is translated by McKenna as 'the troops of the Field of Heroes (Eire)' (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: reighidh a Rí an rí an ríomha / go tì ì fà fhíadh Anghoine (Coitirgh, a Christ, caithbh Dhonchaidh, RIA 3 (23 L.17), 12b, q. 2).

42b ag gabháil torr I have no other example of the expression gabháidh tar and tentatively take it to mean the same as tèid tar in the sense 'becomes necessary for', 'becomes due' (DIL s.v. tèit, col. 138.8). Thus, I understand the line to mean, 'the land of the Gaoidhil fails due to you', or perhaps, '[the saving off the land of the Gaoidhil is resting on you' (the translation 'depends on you' being a loose rendering of this). Cf. the following examples: Mithiá mo chosg do chionntisbh. / do-chuaideadh thort mo thirrriochtain (DiD 11.23; glossed by McKenna as 'is de dhuaigas anois ort', DiD, p. 433); mo locht os a thuail tugadh. / do-chuaideadh thort mo theasruaghád (DiD 52.39; glossed as 'is é t’uain-se anois cabhraghadh lion' DiD, p. 449).

42c creach... le (i) The term creach is used to describe a territory also in the poem Creach ag Lui十三 nó Léith Mhgha (= O’Hara 13), regarding which McKenna notes: 'Throughout this poem the settlement made in Connacht by Tadhg son of Cian, ancestor of Í Eadbhra, is represented as a creach' (O’Hara, p. 387). (ii) On the use of the preposition le; compare: creach le ceithr Lothra a loingseibh / mochbhag bhreith an bádubhfin 'the creach borne off by Lothra’s hero, cows prematurely caiving in the ships' (BST 211.2).

42d cóir ormarbh a fháladh ort Cf. cóir a fhala or oight Céin 'justly is Cian’s heirl 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. Cosmhair re lón, 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-einté áirimheach liorn / nár ghabh airdcheannas Éiríonn, / ó Chollag go Gaoidheal na Glas, / más laoidheadh orra an t-eolais? '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. Fiadh ag tabhacht umhla d’úir – mór labhras lucht an iomthnúidh – / claoi an bhla fa Fhidh nÉirne / tarrla cuidh ‘sa choimhreach. ‘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 fiúbh / do lámhach lucht an iomthnúidh, / ó[s] sibh chaomhna an chóigidh, / rimn gach aonhchrúghadgh ‘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 ecairt, a chlanna Néill, q. 6, edited by B. Ó Cuív, ‘A poem on the I Néill’, Celtica 2 (1952-4) 245-51).

43b gCaithir Namely, Cathaoir Mór, legendary ancestral king of the Leinstermen. On the form, see note on 45c.

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’, Érie 55 (2005) 147-66: 147-9). An alternative would be to emend an mór to ainmhuir, but this seems unlikely.

44d flior shealbha Compare for sealbha gach saorchineoil ‘the overlord of every noble people’ (Maguire 20.1e).

44d críche Cuinn A poetic name for Ireland (‘the land of Conn Céadchathach’).

45b linn duas That this ‘flood of gifts’ is probably meant for poems in reflected in the description tonn oíoinh nár fhil Í sgoil (47b). For figurative uses of l(o)inn ‘pool’, ‘lake’, ‘body of water or liquid in general’, see DIL s.v. 1 linn (c), and cf. Ní thíbhre is gith soirbh éigeas / inghean Domhnaill acht duas lán, / croideach as lomndáin do linn oíoinh / len binn comhraidh dofhígh dhámn ‘Domhnall’s daughter gives naught but overflowing reward to a poet even though he be easily satisfied (‘); her heart overflows with generosity andloves the difficult language of the poets’ (AiD 31.40) and Friosd lúach a hanliamha / an gheag go genuas choillcrioghdha; / téd linnn bádha baintriogha / ós chionn trágha a throméidh guilhula ‘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 gcuimhnaigh is for rhyme with Rudhraigh. For the by-forms cumh(n)gaighidh/cuimh(n)gighidh (‘constricts’, ‘confines’, etc.), see IGT iii.106, and DIL, s.v. cuimgaide.

45cd gCaithir … thaithir The normal and historic spelling of these two words is Cathaoir and tathair. As well as appearing elsewhere in the Nugent Manuscript (Dá néall orcha ós iath Uímsigh, 42v, qq. 9 and 32), the form Caithir occurs with metrical support in the 17th-century ‘Tinnakill Duanaire’ and the Book of O’Conor Don (see Ó Raghlaille, ‘A poem to Aodh Buidhe and Alsadar Mac Domhnaill’, 7c n.). It also occurs in the 16th-century ‘Seithfinn Duanaire’: A gael sud in (?) soileimhi / a ghael re cru in Caitheir- si / i can umnaí is inairme / triath Muman a macaim-si (匕 Fú a gúigeadh crioch Osraige, TCD MS 1263 (H.4.22) st. 7). As for tathir, the only other bardic example I have found is in the above-mentioned Dá néall orcha ós iath Uímsigh, rhymeing with Caithir (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. taichir, ut est nt tairim cluas clothach n-ergua. i. nocha taithimn eisteacht na cluasin cluainis in etaragn, 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’ Dvorinn’s glossary’, Archiv für celtische Lexikographie 2 (1904) 197–204, § 1518).

46a Compare the use of caiul de in the following: Leat aichd munab lór a fail / a mhic Dê i ndiul mo pheacnaíth / ceirse ar a deoraíth e did / caiul de fheolhaíl an airdriag ‘If, O Son of God, Thou thinkest that her blood requires not my sin, add to its drops the stream of the Lord’s blood’ (Pilbo Bocht 14.24) and Braon d’fail Collo na coig ngreanta / gég d’Ibh Conmíll cosmas glaíidh / fiseareabh don fhual -si Neill maraigh / caiul de freinb badhthaigh Brian (Beag mharaide na mhacraídh Ghaoidheal. RIA MS 90 (24 P 12), p. 140, q. 39).

46a Chearbhall This must refer to Rudhraighe’s maternal lineage. The Úi Chearbhall (O’Carrolls) territory of Éile lay west of the lands of the Úi Mhórdha.

47cd I do not understand this couplet. For cnú órtha ‘golden trinket’, see Ó Raghláilagh, ‘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 órtha The occurrence in the late language of the form órtha (cf. MSS) is noted in DIL, s.v. órtha. For orthalartha, see IGT ii.8.

50c bhfeithigh 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 fheáinne ‘the round brooch’, AöD 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 eclipse in Middle Irish, see SNG, 239.

50d dár choimhthéid Slender -d is fixed by rhyme here with bhfeithigh, thus implying the existence of a by-form coimhthéaidh for the verb coimhthéadaidh ‘keeps, guards, watches’. Instances of slender -d are rare, but do occur, e.g. 2 sg. impv. coimhthéid in DBM 12.67 and 14.3, and O’Hara 3159; cf. also preterite do choimhthéid in TribB 1514, 3272, 3592.

51d féigín For internal rhyme with édir I have emended N’s féachadh to féigín. This form, however, is marked as lochtaich 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 féigín I have come across in verse. The other is in a poem by Taadh Dall Ó Míginn: [Ní linnann] biodhtha, a bharr thiong, / do theacht chugam d’i d’chluinear, / an chroich fhìoimhna on féigín troigh – / a ciomhsa d’fhéigín d’ardubh ‘If thy coming to us be heard of, O clustering lacks, foeman [will not dare] to look from on high at the borders of this fair country from which one must go’ (TD 41.18).