



Coire Sois, The Cauldron of Knowledge: A Companion to Early Irish Saga

Tomas O Cathasaigh



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Coire Sois, The Cauldron of Knowledge: A Companion to Early Irish Saga offers thirty-one previously published essays by Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, which together constitute a magisterial survey of early Irish narrative literature in the vernacular.

Ó Cathasaigh has been called “the father of early Irish literary criticism,” with writings among the most influential in the field. He pioneered the analysis of the classic early Irish tales as literary texts, a breakthrough at a time when they were valued mainly as repositories of grammatical forms, historical data, and mythological debris. All four of the Mythological, Ulster, King, and Finn Cycles are represented here in readings of richness, complexity, and sophistication, supported by absolute philological rigor and yet easy for the non-specialist to follow. The book covers key terms, important characters, recurring themes, rhetorical strategies, and the narrative logic of this literature. It also surveys the work of the many others whose explorations were launched by Ó Cathasaigh's first encounters with the literature.

As the most authoritative single volume on the essential texts and themes of early Irish saga, this collection will be an indispensable resource for established scholars, and an ideal introduction for newcomers to one of the richest and most under-studied literatures of medieval Europe.

“Tomás Ó Cathasaigh is that rare scholar in Celtic studies whose work has much to say not only to advanced scholars in the field but also to specialists dealing with other literatures, comparative mythologists, and undergraduates. Our understanding of medieval Irish epic and saga is immeasurably enriched by his elegant writing style, his erudition, and his wide-ranging critical eye. It is indeed a bounteous blessing, then, to have collected in this volume Ó Cathasaigh's best, most representative, and most useful work.”

—**Joseph Nagy, University of California, Los Angeles**

“A turning-point in Celtic studies occurred in 1981 when Tomás Ó Cathasaigh began a series of thematic studies of Irish sagas, starting with ‘The Theme of Lommrad.’ Now, three decades later, his ground-breaking collection of essays has been gathered together in a book. The student experience has been transformed. No essay or article on Irish sagas can be written without consulting Professor Ó Cathasaigh's close readings. We are all in debt to him, Matthieu Boyd, and the University of Notre Dame Press.” —**Patrick Sims-Williams, Aberystwyth University, Wales**

“Tomás Ó Cathasaigh has long been known for his sensitive and superbly nuanced readings of early Irish literature. This impeccably edited collection brings together his most important articles of the past thirty years, many of which appeared originally in anthologies and periodicals not always easy to find outside Ireland. Ó Cathasaigh's deep learning and profound insights are evident on every page. This is truly a 'must-have' book both for specialists in Celtic and for all medievalists interested in vernacular culture and the intersection of native and Latin traditions.” —**Robin Stacey, University of Washington**

“To read Tomás Ó Cathasaigh's essays gathered and ordered in this splendid volume is to explore the web of early Irish literature with a learned and witty guide. Each chapter stops at a particular point in the early Irish literary record, but the light that Ó Cathasaigh sheds on each text or theme illuminates the entirety of the landscape. His close attention to the nuances of language and his finely tuned sense of social relationships in

medieval Ireland are but two of the qualities that make Ó Cathasaigh perhaps the most skilled reader that early Irish literature has ever had. *Coire Sois* will be an indispensable *vade mec*



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