



Playing the Hero: Reading the Táin Bó Cúailnge

Ann Dooley

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In *Playing the Hero*, Ann Dooley examines the surviving manuscript versions of the greatest of the early Irish sagas, the *Táin Bó Cuailnge* (Cattle-Raid of Cooley), and creates a picture of the cultural conditions and literary mind-sets under which medieval scribes recreated the text. Dooley argues that the scribes' work is both a transmission and a translation, and that their own changing historical circumstances within the space of one hundred years, from the beginning to the end of the twelfth century, determines the specifics of their literary creativity.

Playing the Hero is a unique example of more contemporary literary methodologies – post-structuralist, feminist, historicist and beyond – being used to illuminate the Irish saga world. Dooley provides a commentary for the saga, helping to re-animate its literary sophistication. Her work is an interrogation of both the Irish epic hero – a reading of the male through the medium of feminine discourse – and the process whereby violence as normalized in the saga genre can be recovered as problematic and troubling. Dooley's work is groundbreaking and will provoke a wide response in Medieval Irish studies.



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