

Ernmas) is only mentioned in passing by Waddell (p. 85), while he focuses on two of the others in conjunction with his discussion of Navan Fort.

In addition, on occasion Waddell appears somewhat to misrepresent the texts he uses, for example his judicious quoting from the text *Baile in Scáil* excises its Christian context, by implying that the character Lug identifies himself as a god: ‘The man declares he is no mere spectral apparition but the god Lug: “My name is Lug, son of Ethliu, son of Tigernmas.”’ (p. 112). However, in *Baile in Scáil* the figure in question clearly does not claim divinity and disavows any otherworldly nature, claiming rather to be a (deceased) member of the human race. To quote Máire Herbert’s translation, which Waddell uses: ‘I am not a phantom, nor an Otherworldly apparition. I have been revealed to you as one who has come back from the dead, and I am of the race of Adam. My name is Lug, son of Ethliu, son of Tigernmas.’ Notwithstanding that an argument can be made that this Lug is a euhemerised deity, it is nonetheless surely misleading to present this material as if it possesses no Christian context.

In conclusion, although John Waddell is one of the foremost archaeologists of prehistoric Ireland – and in light of his enormous contribution to the study of Ireland’s prehistory – it is regrettable to say that this is not a book that I can recommend.

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COIRE SOIS: THE CAULDRON OF KNOWLEDGE. A COMPANION TO EARLY IRISH SAGA.

By Tomás Ó Cathasaigh; edited by Matthieu Boyd. Pp xxx, 618. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. 2014. Paperback \$72.

CLASSICAL LITERATURE AND LEARNING IN MEDIEVAL IRISH NARRATIVE. Edited by

Ralph O’Connor. Pp viii, 244. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer. 2014. £60 (Studies in Celtic History, 34).

The first volume is a collection of essays by Tomás Ó Cathasaigh (Henry L. Shattuck professor of Irish Studies in the department of Celtic Languages and Literatures at Harvard University), consisting mainly of studies previously published in a variety of outlets over the last forty years. Professor Ó Cathasaigh is one of the most eminent figures in medieval Irish studies to have devoted his attention to the study of medieval Irish literature *as literature*, and his published work has appeared almost entirely in essay form (with the exception of his 1977 book *The heroic biography of Cormac mac Airt*). As with any collection of essays, this volume has the merit of assembling together in one place some publications otherwise scattered among difficult-to-obtain journals and volumes, such as the moribund Japanese journal *Studia Celtica Japonica* and the limited-edition festschrift *Folia Gadelica*; consequently *Coire Sois* will be of particular benefit for the North American audience at which it seems to be aimed primarily (p. xix). In this brief review three features of *Coire Sois* have been considered worth highlighting.

Firstly, there are no new contributions in this volume, with the exception of a translation into English (by the author) of an essay entitled ‘*Tóralocht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne*’ (‘The pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne’), originally published in *Léachtaí Cholm Cille* 25 (1995), nor have the individual articles been substantially revised. Editorial intervention is minimal, confined mainly to correcting misprints and standardising names and referencing systems across the essays, while more invasive corrections ‘have been made only with the author’s knowledge and approval’ (p. xix).

Secondly, the title is somewhat misleading, for while the sum of Ó Cathasaigh’s contributions to the study of medieval Irish literature could indeed be termed a ‘cauldron of

knowledge', this volume cannot be justifiably labelled as a companion to early Irish saga, notwithstanding the inclusion of introductory material such as 'Irish myths and legends' (pp 1–15). This is somewhat remedied by the editor's provision (with Ó Cathasaigh's input) of a 'further reading' section, aimed at flagging some of the most important relevant works since the original publication of each article (pp 484–500). One in particular – which may have been thought worthy of inclusion in this volume (and would go toward vindicating its subtitle) – is Ó Cathasaigh's 'The literature of medieval Ireland to c.800: St Patrick to the Vikings', in *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature* (2005).

Thirdly, mention must be made of the foreword to this book by Professor Declan Kiberd, which contains, to this reviewer at least, a number of gratuitous swipes at previous generations of scholars and their disciplines, who supposedly feared the artistic power of the stories Ó Cathasaigh analyses. In consequence, according to Kiberd, scholars 'retreated into a merely linguistic or historical analysis' (p. x) and he sees in Ó Cathasaigh's work a call for them 'to look up from their grammatical dictionaries and to engage in the wider debate' (p. xiii). In addition, the view that Cú Chulainn as 'a figure who combines pagan ferocity with a death while strapped to a pillar will continue to strike many of us as a prefiguration of muscular Christians, a sort of English public-schoolboy in the drag of Celtic hero' (p. xiii) is not one shared by this reviewer (and one wonders how extensive the 'many of us' who hold such opinions are).

Overall, while there are many aspects of this volume to be welcomed, it offers little new to those who already have access to Professor Ó Cathasaigh's works through well-stocked libraries (particularly in Ireland) and online resources such as the JSTOR 'Irish Studies' portal. This observation, however, should not be seen as a negative reflection upon the value of Professor Ó Cathasaigh's work and the importance of his contribution to the study of medieval Irish literature in particular.

From the tenth century onwards, medieval Irish authors engaged with Classical literature in a variety of ways and Ralph O'Connor's edited collection of essays is dedicated to the interplay between Classical literature and the written (and to a degree oral) narrative literature of medieval Ireland – an interaction that was conditioned by 'both the cultural self-confidence of the Irish authors and their awareness of the unquestioned authority and grandeur of the tradition with which they are engaging' (p. 13). In a wide-ranging introduction, the editor discusses a number of issues, such as the validity of labels like 'translation', 'adaptation', 'history' and 'literature', and includes a short catalogue (in chronological order) of medieval Irish adaptations of Classical material (pp 13–17).

The book is divided subsequently into three sections, consisting of essays on individual Irish Classical sagas (e.g. *Togail Troi* ('The destruction of Troy')), the use of Classical allusions in vernacular Irish narratives (e.g. an explicit comparison of Brian Boru's son, Murchad, with Hector, in *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh* ('The war of the Irish with the foreigners')), and the possible influence of Classical compositional techniques in Irish sagas (e.g. the use of the 'watchman device' in *Táin Bó Cúailnge* ('The cattle raid of Cooley')). In order to give a flavour for the book, one essay from each of these sections will be described briefly.

The first section opens with an essay by Erich Poppe on *Imtheachta Aeniasa* ('The adventures of Aeneas'), an Irish prose adaptation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, dating to the eleventh or twelfth century. Poppe takes as his starting point Brent Miles's work on the employment of a classicizing aesthetic in *Togail Troi* and *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, and shows how, surprisingly, some passages in *Togail Troi* are actually closer to Virgil than corresponding sections of *Imtheachta Aeniasa*. He tentatively concludes that *Imtheachta Aeniasa* appears to represent 'a somewhat different translational and aesthetic format', indicating that there was a 'range of stylistic options available to Irish redactors of Classical sources' (p. 39).

Máire Ní Mhaonaigh focuses her attention on the portrayal of Murchad, son of Brian Boru, as a metaphorical Hector in *Cogadh Gáedhel re Gallaibh*, a text on which she is the undoubted authority. As she demonstrates, the comparison was 'more than a literary flourish' (p. 161), but instead involved placing Murchad within a chronology of classical

and (primarily) Irish heroes that skilfully manipulated the concepts of the Ages of Man and Ages of the World; in doing so the author of *Cogadh* engaged in a self-conscious and self-declared *intamlugud intliuchta* ('learned interpretation') – itself a formulation that may reflect the terminology of twelfth-century scholastic philosophy (p. 155).

Lastly Ralph O'Connor (the editor), looks at the 'watchman device' in *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, a narrative device in which a character observes and describes a scene (frequently a person or group of people) to a companion, who then correctly interprets it. This is a common feature in discussions of Classical influence on medieval Irish literature, owing to its use in both traditions, and O'Connor uses it as a means of examining the issue of whether Classical imitation was necessary for the writing of large-scale Irish sagas. He concludes that while Classical influence was significant in some sagas (and played an increasingly important role as the Middle Irish period progressed), it is not the only explanation for the organisational models of the longer Irish sagas.

Classical literature and learning in medieval Irish narrative is an important contribution to the reception and influence of Classical literature in medieval Ireland and a welcome addition to D. S. Brewer's 'Studies in Celtic History' series, which has previously published important works in this area, such as Brent Miles's *Heroic saga and classical epic in medieval Ireland* (2011). It is to be hoped that this important field of enquiry – which has the potential to shed light on many aspects of medieval Irish culture – will continue to grow.

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WOODSTOWN: A VIKING-AGE SETTLEMENT IN CO. WATERFORD. Edited by Ian Russell and Maurice F. Hurley. Pp xxiv, 413, illus. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2014. €36 paperback.

THE CROSS OF CONG: A MASTERPIECE OF MEDIEVAL IRISH ART. By Griffin Murray. Pp xxxiv, 326, illus. Dublin: Irish Academic Press and the National Museum of Ireland. 2014. €40.50 hardback.

Woodstown is one of the most significant publications in medieval Irish studies – and indeed Viking-Age studies – for several years. It is the archaeological report of excavations that were undertaken at Woodstown (County Waterford), under the direction of one of the editors (Ian Russell), during the construction of the N25 Waterford city bypass in the early 2000s. The finds were of such significance that the bypass was rerouted, the site was declared a national monument (in 2005), and further excavations were undertaken.

What emerges from this publication is a partial picture of a substantial Viking settlement on the banks of the river Suir (in the form of a pair of associated D-shaped enclosures encompassing over 29,000 square metres), approximately nine kilometres upstream from the medieval core of Waterford city, which is all the more remarkable for having previously been unknown. There is no solid documentary evidence to point to a Viking settlement at Woodstown, nor does the documentary and archaeological evidence point to intensive native settlement in the vicinity during the immediate pre-Viking period (although small Neolithic and Mesolithic finds at Woodstown indicate settlement in the more remote past). The post-excavation archaeological picture is also far from complete, owing to the acidic nature of the soil, which has resulted in very poor survival of organic material (such as bones, textiles and domestic waste), while agricultural and commercial use of the land (including the construction of