



The Islandman: The Hidden Life of Tomás O'Crohan (Reimagining Ireland)

Irene Lucchitti

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This book concerns Tomás O'Crohan of the Blasket Islands and offers a radical reinterpretation of this iconic Irish figure and his place in Gaelic literature. It examines the politics of Irish culture that turned O'Crohan into «The Islandman» and harnessed his texts to the national political project, presenting him as an instinctual, natural hero and a naïve, almost unwilling writer, and his texts as artefacts of unselfconscious, unmediated linguistic and ethnographic authenticity. The author demonstrates that such misleading claims, never properly scrutinised before this study, have been to the detriment of the author's literary reputation and that they have obscured the deeply personal and highly idiosyncratic purpose and nature of his writing. At the core of the book is a recognition that what O'Crohan wrote was not primarily a history, nor an ethnography, but an autobiography. The book demonstrates that the conventional reading of the texts, which privileges O'Crohan's fisherman identity, has hidden from view the writer protagonist inscribed in the texts, subordinating his identity as a writer to his identity as a peasant. The author shows O'Crohan to have been a literary pioneer who negotiated the journey from oral tradition into literature as well as a modern, self-aware man of letters engaging deliberately and artistically with questions of mortality.



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