

Horslips, Concerning The Tain

Ireland's most exciting saga is, undoubtedly, Tain Bo Cuailgne (The Cattle Raid of Cooley), the centrepiece of the Ulster cycle of Heroic Tales.

Normally referred to as "The Tain", it deals with the conflict between the forces of Connacht and Ulster for possession of a prize bull.

The events of the Tain are estimated to have taken place in Ireland approximately 500 B.C. The earliest written version of the Tain known to us is contained in the Book of the Dun Cow, which dates from the 12th century. Before this the story was kept alive by storytellers.

Two other manuscript versions are also available; the 12th century Book of Leinster and the 14th century Yellow Book of Lecan. The Tain, as Ireland's equivalent of the Aeneid, has long intrigued historians, academics and writers.