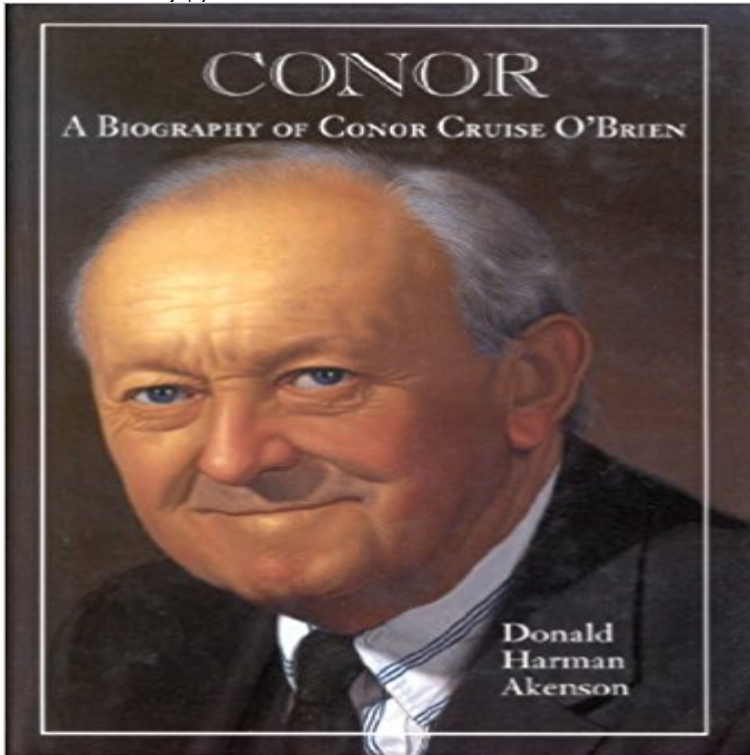


Conor, Volume II: A Biography of Conor Cruise OBrien: Volume II, Anthology



The career of Conor Cruise OBrien reads like the work of several people, not just one. Having served as a diplomat under Sean MacBride, he came to world prominence as special representative to Dag Hammarskjold, Secretary General of the United Nations, in the then-Congo. Squeezed ruthlessly by big-power politics, he resigned and wrote *To Katanga and Back* (1962), a classic in modern African history and still the only book to get behind the polished marble facade to reveal how the United Nations works. OBrien then became Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ghana, and battled for academic freedom against one of the most amiable of tyrants, Kwame Nkrumah. He moved on to become the first incumbent of the Schweitzer Chair at New York University. His relations with the New York intellectuals of the time were productive, acrimonious, sometimes comic - and part of a central chapter in the intellectual history of America in the 1960s. From 1969 to 1977 OBrien was probably the most hated person in Ireland, as well as one of the most heroic. One of the first to see the fascistic nature of the Provisional IRA, he began an unrelenting campaign against its terrorism. In that campaign he called into question the basic myths upon which the Irish republic was constructed. His *States of Ireland* (1972) is the most publicly influential piece of Irish historical writing since John Mitchels *The Last Conquest of Ireland* (1860), and many students of Irish history believe that OBriens work in the 1970s was crucial to averting civil war in Ireland. Whatever one thinks about this extraordinary man, one cannot ignore him. He may well be the most important Irish nonfiction writer of the twentieth century, with writings as widely scattered as they have been influential. Volume I, *Narrative* is the biography of one of the most controversial, engaging, and courageous individuals of

this century. Volume II, Anthology brings together his best short pieces, many of which originally appeared in such periodicals as the Spectator, the New Republic, Harpers, the Atlantic, the New Statesman, the Observer, and the New York Review of Books and have never been reprinted. A complete bibliography of OBriens work is also provided.

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