



Lyric, Meaning, and Audience in the Oral Tradition of Northern Europe (ND Poetics of Orality and Literacy)

Thomas A. DuBois

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"Thomas DuBois's new book demonstrates an extraordinary range of languages and cultural traditions and should appeal to a correspondingly broad readership. He writes, too, for Everyman—a skillful elucidator of lyric in the clothing of a theory-oriented folklorist. DuBois's schema for tracking the various forms of reception and how they govern 'meaning,' especially in performed literature, is comprehensive, but the lover of individual poems will not find that they have been sacrificed to theory." —**Joseph Harris, Francis Lee Higginson Professor of English Literature and Professor of Folklore, Harvard University**

"In his ground-breaking book, Thomas DuBois draws on studies in oral tradition and on literary approaches to make the case for a European lyric mode of wide-ranging breath. Students of medieval studies, literary studies, and folklore all will benefit from his work." —**John Miles Foley, Center for Studies in Oral Tradition, University of Missouri**

By looking at the ways in which cultures in Northern Europe interpret lyric songs, Thomas A. DuBois illuminates both commonalities of interpretive practice and unique features of their musical traditions. DuBois draws on sets of lyric songs from England, Wales, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, and Finland to explore the question of meaning in folklore, especially the role of traditional audiences in appraising and understanding nonnarrative songs.

DuBois's examples range from the medieval and early modern periods to the late twentieth century. He examines lyric songs embedded within prose or poetic narratives; the ritual use of lyric as charms and laments in premodern Europe; the development of personalized meanings within hymns and devotional prayers of the high Middle Ages; Shakespeare's lyric songs and their demands on the audience; and the ways in which professional lyric singers encourage certain interpretations of their songs.

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