

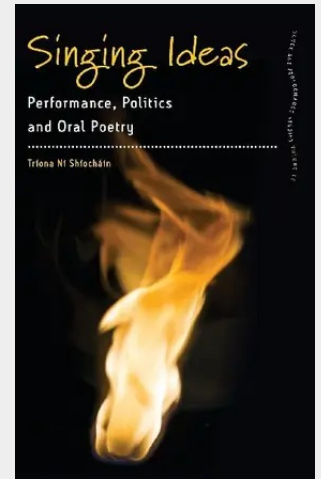
Shíocháin

Singing Ideas

Performance, Politics and Oral Poetry

Considered by many to be the greatest Irish song poet of her generation, Máire Bhuí Ní Laeire (Yellow Mary O'Leary; 1774–1848) was an illiterate woman unconnected to elite literary and philosophical circles who powerfully engaged the politics of her own society through song. As an oral arts practitioner, Máire Bhuí composed songs whose ecstatic, radical vision stirred her community to revolt and helped to shape nineteenth-century Irish anti-colonial thought. This provocative and richly theorized study explores the re-creative, liminal aspect of song, treating it as a performative social process that cuts to the very root of identity and thought formation, thus re-imagining the history of ideas in society.

Singing Ideas: this is a highly original concept that echoes of A.B. Lord's seminal work of oral theory entitled 'The Singer of Tales', but ultimately fuses oral theory and performance theory with social and anthropological theory which makes it very distinctive. This is the first full length monograph to theorize singing as thought formation, and also includes the theorization of song as a liminal ludic space. This is the first scholarly analysis in English of this important non-literate female song composer, Máire Bhuí Ní Laeire, and tells the story of her contribution to the development of anti-colonial thought through song, thus re-imagining the contribution of women to the history of thought. This book challenges academic assumptions about the pre-eminence of literate culture, and makes a claim for the sheer centrality of oral tradition and performance practices in the generation of ideas in society.



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