



The Form and Function of Ritual Dialogue in the Marriage Traditions of Celtic-language Cultures

Neill Martin

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The study examines the form and function of ritual dialogue in marriage traditions, paying particular attention to the betrothal ceremony or reiteach in Gaelic Scotland, along with analogues in Brittany and Wales, while also exploring the relationship between the ritual dialogues and traditions such as flyting and bardic contest. What emerges is a picture of the multi-referential potential of this form of ritual speech and the symbolic significance which lies behind the surface meaning. The human drama of marriage is seen to be submerged within an all-encompassing symbolic event which adopts as its structure the spirit of conflict, dramatising the give and take of the relationship the community both desires and fears.

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