

Emily Lyle

Fairies and Folk:
Approaches to the Scottish Ballad Tradition

Sigrid Rieuwerts (Ed.)

B • A • S • E

Ballads and Songs – Engagements

Volume 1

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Front Cover: Detail of the painting
“The Eildon Hills and the Tweed with
Littledean Tower” by James Ward.
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WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier
Bergstraße 27, 54295 Trier
Postfach 4005, 54230 Trier
Tel.: (0651) 41503
Fax: (0651) 41504
Internet: <http://www.wvttrier.de>
E-Mail: wvt@wvttrier.de

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

When one is engaged in the quest for ballads and songs one is often struck by the images and views which appear on the journey. In the eighteenth century, J. G. Herder viewed ballads as wild flowers, calling them *Naturpoesie* and the nineteenth-century editor of *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Francis J. Child, likened them to roses. "I am glad to hear of your roses", William Macmath, his Edinburgh correspondent on ballad matters, wrote to Child in the summer of 1890 but added:

My ferns have one advantage over your roses; there are more easily associated with ballads! I have a maidenhair spleenwort (I think that's the name) growing well which two years ago I picked out of the walls of Earlston Tower and since I came here I have appropriated a prickly shield from the bank of Huntly where True Thomas sat. (Letter to Child, 26th July 1890; Child Mss vol. 13: f. 99)¹

Many years later, another scholar from Edinburgh, namely Emily Lyle, galloped across these same hills in the quest for ballads and the truth about True Thomas the Rhymer. It is therefore more than appropriate that the first volume of our new series of BALLADS AND SONGS – ENGAGEMENTS (B·A·S·E) has on its cover, music-making and Eildon Hills, the area in the Scottish borders steeped in tradition and ballad lore.

When BALLADS AND SONGS – ENGAGEMENTS was first contemplated as a series of monographs, accompanying BALLADS AND SONGS – INTERNATIONAL STUDIES, dedicated to the publication of essays, I immediately approached this very scholar, Emily Lyle and asked her to publish the results of her many years of research in the field of Scottish ballad studies as the first volume of B·A·S·E. Lyle offered *Fairies and Folk: Approaches to the Scottish Ballad Tradition* – an exciting volume that provides new insight into the world of the Scottish ballads, their singers and editors, and above all, their particular view of the world, natural and supernatural. For decades, students at Edinburgh, Harvard and elsewhere have benefited from Lyle's vast store of knowledge on the Scottish ballad tradition. It is, however, amazing that despite her numerous publications and editions of ballads – among them, the Harris manuscripts, the Andrew Crawford's collection and the highly acclaimed Greig-Duncan Collection – she has up to now never had the opportunity to publish a full-length study on Scottish ballads. To open B·A·S·E with a book by Emily Lyle is therefore a great pleasure and honour.

As the title *Fairies and Folk* indicates, the first part is focussed on a group of fairy ballads, namely "Thomas the Rhymer", "The Wee Wee Man", "King Orpheus", "Sir Colin", "Tam Lin" and "The Queen of Elfan's Nourice", and sets them in the context of traditional beliefs and of Scottish culture, present (sung performances) and past (the medieval world of the romances). The second part, *Folk*, turns to Scottish antiquaries,

¹ Child, Francis James. *English and Scottish Popular Ballad Materials*. 33 vols. 1849-1914. Houghton Library, Harvard University. MsAm 2349. [Child Mss]

scholars, and singers (many of them women) who were involved with the ballad heritage in the rich century of collection and research from Motherwell's first field-work in South-West Scotland in 1825 to the publication in 1925 of ballads from the North-East gathered by Greig and Duncan. The interchange of letters between William Motherwell and Peter Buchan, published here for the first time, makes fascinating reading, and so does the intriguing correspondence between F. J. Child and the Scots who contributed so substantially to his classic edition, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*.

Emily Lyle's *Fairies and Folk* is an excellent start to our new monograph series B·A·S·E, for her book offers many exciting new insights and is a must for anyone with an interest in ballad studies or Scottish culture.

More books will follow in B·A·S·E that discuss the richness of narrative song in the different cultural traditions and will facilitate comparison, dialogue and co-operation across cultures. Contributions are invited in German, French, or English by anyone engaged in the study of ballads and songs. Just like B·A·S·I·S, the new monograph series B·A·S·E aims to meet the need for continued literary, musical, sociological, historical, and cultural research in the field of our vast heritage of ballads and songs by providing a platform for the discussion of ballads and songs in an international context.

Alte Schule, Zotzenheim

Sigrid Rieuwerts²
General Editor of B·A·S·E

² Please address all enquires to: The General Editor of B·A·S·E, Dr. Sigrid Rieuwerts, Department of English and Linguistics, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, Jakob-Welder-Weg 18, 55099 Mainz, Germany.

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- 1.2. "A Reconsideration of the Place-Names in 'Thomas the Rhymer'." *Scottish Studies* 13 (1969): 65-71.
- 1.3. "Thomas of Erceldoune: The Prophet and the Propheesied." *Folklore* 79 (1968): 111-21.
- 1.4. "The Celtic Affinities of the Gift in 'Thomas of Erceldoune'." *English Language Notes* 8 (1970-71): 161-64; by permission of the editor.
- 1.5. "The Relationship between 'Thomas the Rhymer' and 'Thomas of Erceldoune'." *Leeds Studies in English* New Series 4 (1970): 23-30; by permission of the editor.
- 1.6. "'The Wee Wee Man' and 'Als Y Yod on Ay Mounday'." *Scottish Literary News* 3 (1973): 21-29; by permission of The Association for Scottish Literary Studies.
- 1.7. "The Visions in 'St. Patrick's Purgatory', 'Thomas of Erceldoune', 'Thomas the Rhymer' and 'The Dæmon Lover'." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 72 (1971): 716-22.
- 1.8. "'The Turk and Gawain' as a Source of 'Thomas of Erceldoune'." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 6 (1970): 98-102; by permission of Oxford University Press (oup@oupjournals.org).
- 1.9. "'Sir Landevale' and the Fairy-Mistress Theme in 'Thomas of Erceldoune'." *Medium Ævum* 42 (1973): 244-50.
- 2.2. "'Sir Orfeo' and the Recovery of Amis from the Otherworld in 'Guy of Warwick'." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 80 (1979): 65-68.
- 2.3. "Orpheus and Tristan." *Medium Ævum* 50 (1981): 305-08.
- 2.4. "'King Orpheus' and the Harmony of the Seasons." In *The Ballad Image*. Ed. James Porter. Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, University of California. 20-29. © 1983, The Regents of the University of California. By permission of the Center. All rights reserved.
- 2.5. "'The Twa Magicians' as Conception Story." *Scottish Studies* 23 (1979): 79-82.
- 3.2. "Parity of Ignorance: Child's Judgment on 'Sir Colin' and the Scholarly Value of the Scottish Verdict 'Not Proven'." *The Ballad and Oral Literature*. Ed. Joseph Harris. Harvard English Studies 16. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991. 109-15. By permission of The Department of English and American Literature and Language at Harvard University.

- 4.2. "The Opening of 'Tam Lin'." *Journal of American Folklore* 83 (1970): 33-43; by permission of The American Folklore Society <www.afsnet.org>.
- 4.3. "The Teind to Hell in 'Tam Lin'." *Folklore* 81 (1970): 177-81.
- 4.4. "The Ballad 'Tam Lin' and Traditional Tales of Recovery from the Fairy Troop." *Studies in Scottish Literature* 6 (1969): 175-85; by permission of the editor.
- 5.2. "The Matching of Andrew Blaikie's Ballad Tunes with their Texts." *Scottish Studies* 16 (1972): 175-80.
- 6.1. "Child's Scottish Harvest." *Harvard Library Bulletin* 25 (1977): 125-54; by permission of the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

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Emily Lyle
Celtic and Scottish Studies
University of Edinburgh
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