

The Bedesman and the Hodbearer: The Epistolary Friendship of Francis James Child and William Walker. Edited and Introduced by Mary Ellen Brown. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press for the Elphinstone Institute, 2001. Pp. 117, ISBN 1-85752-299-0, pbk.)

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It seems that much of contemporary ballad scholarship is spent reassessing the collected texts of early ballad researchers, in contrast to more traditional texts which, rather than approaching Child from a biographical standpoint as historical figure, primarily look to Child's work as a guide and influence. Child's biographical information, his methods of exclusion and inclusion of songs, as well as his "rationalizing" of texts or his failure to annotate the correct airs for others is a popular area of contemporary scholarship. This is not to suggest that these approaches are negative, as they are often quite sympathetic and provide explanations as to why Child acted in certain ways, and why these acts were justifiable.

Mary Ellen Brown's *The Bedesman and the Hodbearer: The Epistolary Friendship of Francis James Child and William Walker*, an edited collection of correspondence between Child and William Walker, is a case in point. Walker had gathered some ballads during his research for his book *The Bards of Bon-Accord*, a collection of poetry from the Aberdeenshire area. Walker had hoped to have a chapter on balladry in the text, and contacted Child with a number of ballads and variants.

Child kept correspondence with various individuals in order to conduct his research, and Walker, a manager at a loan company, was very involved in bringing specific ballad collections to Child's attention as well as conducting research for him into problems such as unrecognizable place names and turns of phrase in the ballads themselves. Walker, with the help of several people in the Aberdeenshire area, provided Child with answers to questions, transcriptions, and airs, not to mention free labour and a friendship of sorts. The majority of their correspondence was about previously published ballad texts, especially manuscripts by Peter Buchan; Child believed they were part of his earlier *Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland* (1828), but Walker later reviewed them on Child's behalf and discovered that many ballads in the manuscript were never published. Buchan also had another volume of "real rough humour," some of which Walker stated were still in wide circulation.

Walker was the man on the ground; he had pointed out the existence of the manuscripts to Child and continued, during the six years of their correspondence, to pursue them. In the end, he realised their importance and, in the letter that Child probably had no chance to read and/or use, he carefully described both manuscripts to give Child an indication of their significance, reproducing the title pages and the epigrams: “The ancient spirit is not dead,/ Old Times we trust are living here” for the main manuscript; and for the “loose and humorous” ones “to be nice about trifles is trifling and folly,/ The right end of life is to live and be jolly” (5).

In the rush towards the printing of Child’s opus, Walker eventually sent him his transcription of the Buchan text and his notes as to how it correlated with the published text. However, Child died shortly thereafter and the ballads were not incorporated.

Walker’s help was also used in topographical and dialectical matters. A letter from Walker to Child in May of 1894 answers nine questions about the meaning of words and phrases that Child could not understand in the ballads (58). Walker was very extensive in his explanation; for the phrase “Shoes of American Leather”, he gives the following information:

This was an expensive leather made in imitation of Morocco from American Horse hides at the end of the last century. — A patent for its manufacture was granted to William Alison of Langlome for 14 years. — See Scots Mag: 1799. (58)

Walker was also involved in organising the index to the tunes, although Child has suggested that his time would be better spent in helping him identify which places in the ballads were real and which were imaginary (7). Walker was aware that this posed a great difficulty as local names may not be known to non-locals and name corruptions could add to the confusion, which was his justification for instead choosing to work on the tune index. Despite the fact that these letters provide a look into the personal life of Child, they also show his methods of working (such as the lack of strict planning in *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*).

The correspondence can be difficult to wade through in spots, such as when Child asks Walker the meaning of certain words and he dutifully supplies various definitions. It seems that the book would be best read

with *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* close at hand for reference, as Walker and Child bounce from ballad to ballad which can be difficult to follow at times.

The book does provide access to a wealth of archival material that is not otherwise readily available, and for this the Elphinstone Institute should be commended. Mary Ellen Brown's introduction serves to frame the book very nicely, raising issues discussed in the letters and providing illustrative examples. This introduction is fairly self contained and can stand on its own as a piece that may be of interest to a wider audience. The one shortcoming of the book is its lack of extraneous materials such as photos and indexes, the latter which would be very useful for researchers who are interested in the treatment of particular ballads in this correspondence. Overall, *The Bedesman and the Hodbearer* is not for the initiate, and assumes that one has a high degree of knowledge about Child and is seeking to know more. However, it is an informative text which would be a good addition to any ballad scholar's bookshelf.

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The Pilgrim Jubilees. By Alan Young. (Jackson: Mississippi University Press, 2001. Pp. xi+287, list of Pilgrim Jubilee recordings, notes, index, insert containing black/white photographs, ISBN 1-57806-416-3 pbk.)

The Pilgrim Jubilees is an African American group that has been performing gospel music in the quartet style since the 1950s. The author of this book, Alan Young, is a journalist from Auckland, New Zealand and this is his second book about African American gospel music. The information gathered for this work is based on audio and videotaped recordings and long-distance calls with members of the group.

Alan Young, at the beginning of this book, says that he wanted "to let the Pilgrim Jubilees tell their story in their own words, as free as possible from editorial interpretation and qualification" (18). He wanted to write about the Pilgrim Jubilees because "Their story is the story of gospel quartet singing" (9).