

W. F. H Nicolaisen and James Moreira, eds. *The Ballad and the Folklorist: The Collected Papers of David Buchan*. (St. John's, NL: 2013, Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Publications. Pp. 474, ISBN 978-0-88901-433-6.)

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[See table of contents](#)

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museum studies, or public folklore to illustrate potential ways to increase access to archival research.

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The renowned and sometimes controversial ballad scholar and folklorist, David Buchan (1939-1994), enjoyed a varied and distinguished academic career in Scotland and North America. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Aberdeen in 1965 and, after fairly brief stints teaching at the University of Victoria in British Columbia and the University of Massachusetts, returned to Scotland in 1968 to take up an appointment at the University of Stirling. Eleven years later he was appointed head of the Department of Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland, where he spent the remainder of his career as a teacher and researcher. In 1994 he became the first professor of Scottish Ethnology at the University of Aberdeen, but sadly died of cancer later that same year when only fifty-five years old. Despite his early demise, his published scholarly output comprised four books, over sixty articles, and more than thirty reviews.

Although best known for his 1972 publication *The Ballad and the Folk* and the edited collection *A Scottish Ballad Book* that followed a year later, Buchan had already contributed important, original, and influential articles to scholarly journals from 1967 onwards, beginning with "The Maid, the Palmer and the Cruel Mother" and concluding with the posthumously published "Liedkontexte des siebzehnten Jahrhunderts in Aberdeenshire"

in 1995. Although a few of these articles are now available in full text through such online sources as Jstor, Ebsco, and ProQuest, most are not. A collected edition in print form is therefore most welcome, especially as some items were originally published in foreign-language journals and are not easily obtainable, even on interlibrary loan. *The Ballad and the Folklorist* contains thirty-three of the best of Buchan's conference papers and articles. Contrary to the implication in its subtitle, the volume does not provide us with all Buchan's collected papers, but rather less than half of his total output. Rather than presenting them in chronological order, the editors' choices are divided among four categories: "Ballads: History, Collection, and Composition," "Tale Role Papers," "Folk Narrative," and "Northeast Ethnology". From these titles it will be evident that Buchan worked mainly in two distinct, if related, scholarly fields: ballad studies and ethnology. Depending on their own interests, readers of *The Ballad and the Folklorist* are likely to find most interesting the first 240 pages of the book on balladry, or the remaining 175 pages devoted to folk tales, legends, anecdotes, rhymes, plays, and the vernacular culture of north-east Scotland.

The first section on the history, collection, and composition of ballads comprises nine articles, mostly written in the late 1960s and the 1970s. "History and Harlaw" was Buchan's first defense of the historicity of certain Scottish traditional ballads, in this case "The Battle of Harlaw" (Child 163) and "Edom o' Gordon" (Child 178). "Lady Isabel and the Whipping Boy" included his arguments for important links between the folk cultures of north-east Scotland and Scandinavia and the authenticity of Peter Buchan's ballad collection. "Nicol, Scott and the Ballad Collectors" was a fine piece of detective work, establishing that Scottish versions of at least twenty-one Child ballads, scattered among the published collections of Buchan, Motherwell, Maidment, Sharpe, and Scott, were texts sung by radical cooper, grocer, and bookseller James Nicol. "British Balladry: Medieval Chronology and Relations" was Buchan's attempt to solve the puzzle of the origins of the ballad tradition in England and Scotland. His conclusion, on the basis of admittedly slender data, was that "just possibly" the ballad genre in England emerged in the late thirteenth century, "probably" appeared by the late fourteenth century, and "definitely" was in existence by the fifteenth century. While recognizing that the earliest extant Scottish text dated from 1630, he argued that circumstantial historical evidence suggested similar conclusions for balladry north of the border.

It is not possible to outline all the articles in this or subsequent sections of *The Ballad and the Folklorist*, but three more in the first part of the book

demand mention: “Oral Tradition and Literary Tradition: The Scottish Ballads,” “Ballad Formulas and Oral Tradition” and “Ballad Tradition and Hugh Spencer.” The first two of these were further developments of ideas in *The Ballad and the Folk* and provided concise expositions of Buchan’s modified views on how formulas and structures functioned in the composition and re-composition of Scottish ballads, particularly those in the repertoire of Anna Gordon (Mrs. Brown of Falkland). The third was a valuable practical illustration of his method of ballad analysis: a detailed study of the structural architecture of four versions of a single ballad, “Hugh Spencer’s Feats in France” (Child 158). From these articles one can see how Buchan took stimulating ideas from Bertrand Bronson, Albert Lord, and Vladimir Propp (among others), made them his own, and went beyond them in his own creative way.

The second part of *The Ballad and the Folklorist* is devoted to eleven articles, most of which show Buchan applying his own version of tale role analysis to different types of traditional ballads: “wit-combat,” religious, historical, revenant, magical and marvelous, supernatural, and comic. Although titled “Tale Role Papers,” this section actually demonstrates that by the mid-1980s Buchan had progressed well beyond Propp’s theory of tale roles to develop his own holistic method of ballad analysis. It was a multi-layered approach that comprised four components, which he summarized by the anagram TRAC: tale roles, relationships, action, and concerns. By ‘relationships’ he meant to stress the need to go beyond identifying the (usually) triadic pattern of character types revealed by tale role analysis to explore in detail how the ballad portrayed the protagonists as unique individuals caught in social situations not entirely of their own making. By ‘concerns’ he meant primarily the cultural and social contexts in which the actions of these protagonists – who were at once character types and unique individuals – took place. Ballads, he argued, were much more than stories in song: they were psychological studies in which plot and character were used to depict the vicissitudes of human relationships and to comment critically on social norms, placing class and kinship structures and gender roles under the microscope. Had he lived, Buchan would almost certainly have employed this mode of analysis in a book-length study of the Scottish traditional ballad; indeed many of the articles in this second part of *The Ballad and the Folklorist* would have made draft chapters for that study.

In examining the articles reprinted in the “Folk Narrative” and “Northeast Ethnology” sections of this volume, one can see elements of another project Buchan probably had in mind: to write a social history

of the vernacular culture of Aberdeenshire, or perhaps of the somewhat larger region of North East Scotland. Although in the long run he may be best remembered for his brilliant and pioneering work in ballad studies, Buchan was also interested in other aspects of folklore, especially prose stories, anecdotes, folk plays, and legends, and these interests are fairly systematically reflected in *The Ballad and the Folklorist*. Moreover, his historical studies ranged from "Folk Tradition and Literature till 1603" and "Song Context in Seventeenth Century Aberdeenshire" to "The Expressive Culture of Nineteenth Century Scottish Farm Servants." The latter in particular is a gem, placing both ballads in the context of local dances, wonder tales, jokes, riddles, rhymes, rites of passage, and other rituals. These folkloristic and ethnographic articles make fascinating reading, but they are mainly one-off explorations of diverse subjects. Buchan had not yet reached the stage where he could pull them together and integrate them into a more comprehensive account of the folksay and customs of the region. In that sense, the second half of *The Ballad and the Folklorist* is less satisfying than the first half of the book with its unifying focus on the Scottish traditional ballad.

To conclude, it may be useful to put Buchan's work on folksong into a wider context. Before the 1880s, most folklorists collected and studied narrative songs to the neglect of shorter vernacular lyrics, and many academics in the twentieth century maintained that rather narrow perspective. Buchan was no exception. His main focus was on ballad texts. One misses in most of his writing comparison with and analysis of other vernacular song genres. One also misses any sustained interest in ballad tunes. Moreover, folklorists have been divided from the late nineteenth century onwards between those who, like Cecil Sharp and the International Folk Music Council, defined folksong as the product of exclusively oral transmission, and those who, following Frank Kidson, recognized the intricate interaction between oral tradition and transmission by printed broadsides, garlands, and songsters. Buchan was squarely in the camp of Sharp and his disciples. His dismissal of print (and also of verbatim oral transmission) may have been justified for seventeenth and eighteenth century Aberdeenshire. But it would be unwise to generalize his conclusions to the whole of Scotland, let alone Britain and Ireland. Nowadays few ballad scholars would deny the importance of verbatim oral transmission, and few would neglect the role of broadsides. Indeed black-letter broadsides are one of our best sources of vernacular song from the centuries before the Romantic era. And it is becoming clear from the work of Steve Roud and

others that songsters (including, but not limited to, garlands) were also important vehicles for the transmission of older songs, including ballads. Buchan's work, valuable as it was and still is, antedated these more recent scholarly developments. His lens brought one corner of the picture into sharp focus, but that corner was part of the much broader and more varied vernacular song culture of the British Isles that we are only now beginning to reconstruct.

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Eveline MacLeod and Daniel MacInnes. *Celtic Threads: A Journey in Cape Breton*. (Sydney, NS: 2014, Cape Breton University Press. Pp. 120. ISBN 978-1897009796).

I am not a weaver, although I have tried weaving in its most rudimentary form. I have moved a shuttle back and forth across the warp to create a border pattern or a twill. I have never warped a loom, nor am I sure I fully understand the process. I am, however, fascinated by the tradition and process of creating fabric. It was with this in mind that I read *Celtic Threads: A Journey in Cape Breton Craft* by Eveline MacLeod and Daniel W. MacInnes.

Celtic Threads is unique in the small body of literature that examines the history of weaving in the Gaelic Cape Breton tradition. Most of the seminal books on weaving in Cape Breton, such as Harold B. Burnham's *Keep Me Warm One Night* (1972), Florence Mackley's *Handweaving in Cape Breton* (1967), and Mary Black's *New Key to Weaving* (1957), examine patterns, equipment, and materials used in weaving. Eveline MacLeod and Daniel MacInnes, however, take a different approach. *Celtic Threads* focuses on the weavers who introduced the traditions that still survive in Cape Breton in an attempt to recognize the craftspeople too often ignored in the study of material culture. This is not surprising, given that MacLeod is herself a weaver who has been practicing and studying the tradition for more than sixty years.