

Scholarship enables easy and direct access into the extant ballad literature. I recommend it as a research aid to anyone who works with ballads.

F. Marian McNeil. *The Silver Bough*. Edinburgh: Canongate (Distributed by David and Charles, Inc. North Pomfret, Vermont 05053), 1989 (reprint of 1956 edition). Pp. xiii + 242, foreword, introduction, notes, index, bibliography. \$9.95 paper.

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The *Silver Bough* is a reprint of the first of four volumes of Scottish folklore originally published in 1956. While the aim of the series was to provide insight into the Scottish people through an examination of their customs and festivals, this first volume focuses on the folklore, folk beliefs and behaviors which underlie and inform these customs and festivals.

The book is basically organized into subject categories (the druids, the gods, magic, fairies and witches) and broken into various subtopics by key idea. Attempts are made to contextualize the data into some sort of historical and social perspective, and in particular, to relate them to the Celtic calendar. But the book has some serious flaws. Often the sources of data are never clearly referenced, leaving open the question of whether descriptions and behaviors originated in the author's speculations or in written and oral sources. At times I was left wondering when and for whom the beliefs and behaviors were current. Ballads are often quoted as absolute sources without reference to where and from whom they were collected.

In spite of these drawbacks, I find *The Silver Bough* to be a useful resource in my research of Scottish folklore. It weaves one possible fabric of meaning out of many puzzling details. While I remain skeptical of some of the author's conclusions, I feel that McNeil has provided a starting point for further exploration.

William Ian Miller. *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. Pp. xii + 407, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

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Bloodtaking and Peacemaking is both a social history of medieval Iceland and a guide to the intricacies of medieval Icelandic law. As readers of the sagas know, Icelandic sagas, especially the so-called "Family Sagas," are full of legal