

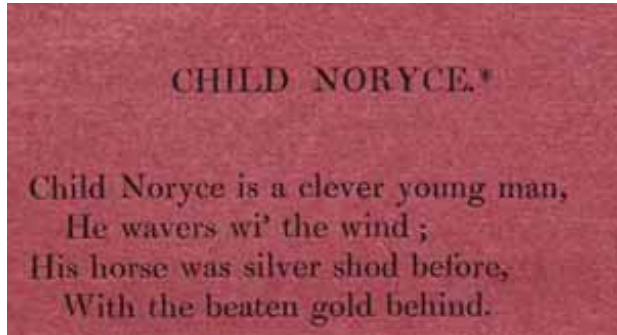
From Song to Print

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One of the most fascinating subjects that I researched for this exhibition was the way in which printed books have recorded Scotland's rich tradition of songs and ballads over the years. Print tends to fix words and music to a standardized form, partly because it is so much easier technically. And then there are the ideas that the people who collect and publish the songs have about literary and musical taste, and what will be acceptable to their readers.

One of the big questions in recording ballads is what text to record. Do you print one particular version, sung at a particular time, or gather a few versions to produce a composite text?



William Motherwell's *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern* (Glasgow, 1827) records where this version of **Child Noryce** was obtained:

That the reader may have no room to doubt the genuineness of a ballad for which a very high antiquity is claimed, the editor thinks it right to mention that it is given verbatim as it was taken down from the singing of widow M'Cormick, who, at this date, (January, 1825,) resides in Westbrae Street of Paisley.

This is one of six copies of the book printed on crimson paper, probably for Motherwell to present as gifts. We have an image of this book in the exhibition, because it would fade the brightly coloured paper to have the book itself on display, but there is a table case of other books illustrating the theme of recording oral tradition.