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With fairy forth Y-nome... (SO, 1.169) : a study of the fairy abductions and rescues in "Thomas Rymer," "Tam Lin," "Sir Orfeo," and "Sir Launfal"

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"With Fairy Forth Y-nome..." (SO, 1.169):

A Study of the Fairy Abductions and Rescues
in
"Thomas Rymer," "Tam Lin," "Sir Orfeo," and "Sir Launfal"

by

Sandra Marie Guy

A Thesis

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	1
Chapter 1. Introduction.....	2
Chapter 2. Literary Functions.....	4
Chapter 3. The Abductions.....	22
Chapter 4. The Rescues.....	44
Chapter 5. Conclusion.....	59
Bibliography.....	67
Vita.....	69

Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the fairy abductions and rescues contained in the ballads "Thomas Rymer" and "Tam Lin," and the Breton lais "Sir Orfeo" and "Sir Launfal." Two aspects of the narratives are specifically explored: the function of the fairy actions as literary devices, and the folklore presented in the abductions and rescues.

The use of the fairy presence in the works' literary devices is varied and extensive; plot, setting, and character are all developed through the interaction of the fairies with their mortal victim. The fairy presence not only provides the narrative structure, but it also contributes detail to indistinct backgrounds and one half of the protagonist/antagonist relationship within the plot.

Folklore also plays an important role in the works, contributing to the narratives traditional background of popular customs and beliefs. What distinguishes the lore contained in the four abductions from that of the rescues is that the abductions share many of the same fairy traditions and motifs, while there are no similar beliefs in connection with the narratives' rescues.

Throughout the study, connections are made between the fairies' function as literary devices and the related function of the incorporated folk traditions.

Chapter 1

Introduction

That the audience of the Middle English ballads and Breton lais was interested in the realm of the supernatural is unquestionable; indeed, the lai has since come to be defined as inherently possessing motifs of magic and enchantment. Of the tales concerning the supernatural race of fairies, the primary motif of folk legends collected to date is the contact of the human realm with that of Elfland.¹ Therefore, it is not surprising to find this concern in ballads such as "Thomas Rymer" (TR) and "Tam Lin" (TL), and the Breton lais of "Sir Orfeo" (SO) and "Sir Launfal" (SL),² where each tells of a human's willing or reluctant experience with fantastic powers. What is shared by these four works, though, is more than the mere appearance of the fairies; all are deeply connected to the folk theme of the fairy abduction and subsequent recovery of the victim.

Upon careful examination, one may discover the intricate manipulation of the fairy abduction motif by the creators of the works. Each of the two ballads and lais represents a distinct facet of the abduction itself, dealing

¹ As summarized by a survey of A Treasury of Irish Folklore, Padraic Colum, ed.

² All references to ballads are from English and Scottish Popular Ballads, F. J. Child, ed., and lais from Middle English Verse Romances, D. B. Sands, ed.

exclusively with the abduction or rescue, or encompassing both. Folk traditions and the manipulation of the fairy realm serve as various literary devices to ornament and illuminate the already rich source material, which by its mere existence affirms the assumption that such vivid narratives concerning the supernatural appealed to the medieval audience.

This study will examine the four works of TR, TL, SO, and SL, and their unique treatments of the fairy abductions. The primary focus shall be the aspects of the folklore tradition contained in the narratives, and the uses of the fairies and fairy realm as literary devices.

Chapter 2

Literary Functions

In the years of critical study of TL, TR, SO, and SL, the primary focus of criticism has been concerned with either source commentary or folk motifs. Few critics to date have acknowledged these four works as anything more than curious folk-creations of either communal origin or the labor of travelling minstrels. However, with a close examination of the works' technical literary features, the artistic skill with which these ballads and lais were crafted proves itself to be extremely intricate and varied. In each of the four works, the fairy abductions operate in the development of plot, setting, and character to such an extent that their existence as integral literary devices cannot be ignored in a study of the works' fairy abductions.

Before beginning a study of the fairy presence's technical functions, a moment must be dedicated to an overview of the prominence of the abductions and retrievals contained within the works. As was suggested in the previous chapter, not all of the four pieces give equal attention to both abduction and rescue. Some emphasize one event at the expense of the other, diminishing its treatment to only a few lines. Due to their length as ballads, TL and TR fall into this category.³ TR considers only the meeting

³ Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines "ballad" as a short narrative poem in typically simple stanzas.

and consequent abduction of Thomas by the Fairy Queen
(variant details from other versions as listed by Child are
noted in parentheses):

While Thomas is lying on Huntlie Bank (B, C, E; grassy bank, A), he sees a fair lady come riding his way. She is splendidly dressed, and he greets her as the Queen of Heaven (A, C, E; flower of the country, B). She denies such a title saying that she is the Queen of Elfland, and has come to visit with Thomas, commenting on his skill to "harp and carp." She further warns him not to kiss her, or else he must become her servant in Elfland for seven years, but he ignores her cautioning. The Queen takes up Thomas on her horse (A, C, D; she rides and Thomas runs, B, E) and they ride until they come to a garden where Thomas tries to pick fruit. The Queen stops him, telling of the sin contained in the fruit (plagues of hell, A; sin of Adam and Eve, B, D, E), and she points to the three roads to heaven, hell, and Elfland. She warns Thomas not to speak in Elfland except to her, or he will never see home again. When Thomas is released by the Fairy Queen after seven years, he receives a coat and shoes of velvet.

As one may note from the summary, Thomas's release is merely mentioned as an addendum to the narrative of Thomas's abduction from the mortal realm:

He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,
And till seven years were past and gone
True Thomas on earth was never seen.
(A, v.16)⁴

Two of the five versions collected by F. J. Child contain such a verse, while a reason for Thomas's release appears in only one of the versions appearing in Child's volume four appendix:

'Ilka seven years, Thomas,
We pay our teindings unto hell,
And ye're sae leesome and sae strang
That I fear, Thomas, it will be yeresell.'
(vol.IV appendix, 455, v.18)

The hasty resolution to the fairy abduction in this case may

⁴ Corresponding verses are: C, v.20.

directly reflect the ballad's source, "Thomas of Erceldoune" (Child, 326). Fytt I of the romance concludes with three verses summarizing Thomas's return to the Eildon tree from which he was taken (v.59-61). Thus the brevity of the ballad's conclusion is not necessarily due to length limitations of the ballad itself, but is more likely caused by a lack of source material dealing with Thomas's return from Elfland.

TL contrasts TR in that the focal event is not the abduction, but the rescue of Tam Lin from the fairy realm:

Janet (A,B,C,H,I; Margaret D,E,F,G) goes to Carterhaugh (A,B,H,I; Kertonha C; Chaster's Wood D,F,G; Charteris Hall E), and finds Tam Lin's horse at a well. She pulls a flower which summons Tam Lin, who questions her purpose in the wood. She claims the land is her own, and returns to her father's hall, pregnant with Tam Lin's child. She meets again with Tam Lin, and her tells of his abduction by the fairies and how Janet might rescue him from his captors: since it is Halloween, she must let the first two companies of the fairy court pass by, pull him off of his white horse, hold him throughout his transformations to animals and iron, and finally counter the fairy magic (dip in liquid B,D,I; cover with green mantle A,B,I; name "Tam Lin" E). She goes to the appointed place, Miles Cross, and completes Tam Lin's instructions, after which the Fairy Queen curses Tam Lin.

The retrieval of Tam Lin is formed in a parallel structure, with the coinciding instructions given by Tam Lin and the actual rescue comprising the majority of subject matter in the ballad. The abduction of Tam Lin, however, does not exceed three verses in the six versions in which it is recounted.⁵ The abductions of Tam Lin in these versions have certain basic elements in common, A version most

⁵ Corresponding verses are: A, v.23; B, v.22-3; D, v.13-4; E, v.7; G, v.25-7; I, v.29-31.

comprehensively reviewing them all:

'And ance it fell upon a day,
A cauld day and a snell,
When we were frae the hunting come,
That frae my horse I fell;
The Queen o Fairies she caught me,
In yon green hill to dwell.

(A, v.23)

B version echoes Tam Lin's hunting and falling practically verbatim while D, E, and I blame the fall on sleep, and G discards the fall and hunt altogether with Tam Lin simply napping under an apple tree. With the limited length of medieval ballads, the reduction of information dealing with either the abduction or restoration of the mortal is in no way surprising, for to extend the narrative would be to exceed the bounds of balladry and approach the definition of verse romance.

SO and SL, which as Breton lais are classified romances, are extensive in their relating of both the abduction and rescue of the victims. SO is the less complex of the two; all events are presented in a straightforward abduction and rescue theme:

Sir Orfeo is a king and excellent harper. His wife, Heroudis, falls asleep under an ympe tree on May 1, and awakens in panic. She tells Orfeo that the King of Fairies came to her and showed her Fairyland's splendor, finally commanding her to prepare to again meet under the ympe tree the next day so that he might take her with him. Orfeo prepares his armies, but the fairy abduction is successful. Saddened, Orfeo leaves his kingdom in the care of his steward and lives as a hermit for ten years, taking only his harp. One day, Orfeo sees a fairy hunt and Heroudis among its ladies. Heroudis sees Orfeo, but says nothing, only bursting into tears. Orfeo follows the fairies back to their dwelling to rescue his wife, and is allowed into the court as a minstrel. In the courtyard, he sees the gruesome bodies of many mortals. He approaches the king and asks to play for him. The king agrees, is charmed by Orfeo's

harping, and promises him anything he desires. Orfeo asks for Heroudis, and the king grants his wish. The couple return to the mortal court, Orfeo still dressed as a hermit, and hear Orfeo's steward lamenting the absence of his king. Orfeo reveals himself, and reclaims his kingdom.

Unlike the ballads, the only limited retelling of events in the narrative is the brief retelling of Heroudis's warning dream (ll.107-50); while the preparation for and the abduction by the fairy king comprises an additional twenty-two lines (ll.155-76). Once Orfeo sees Heroudis in the midst of the fairy troop, his journey to the fairy realm and his wife's rescue proceeds for lines 325-447, double the number of lines dealing with the dream and abduction, but containing a comparable amount of narrative action.⁶ Thus, in SO there is a rough balance of narrative dealing with abduction and retrieval as opposed to the ballads' favoring of one narrative event.

Unlike SO's uncomplicated narrative, SL presents a far less unadorned retelling of the fairy abduction and rescue:

Launfal receives no gifts from the bride at Arthur and Guinevere's wedding, and makes an excuse to leave the queen's disfavor. Arthur sends his two nephews with Launfal, but he falls quickly into debt, so the two young men take leave. Launfal rides out one day, downtrodden and poor, and rests under a tree. Two beautiful maidens approach, wash him, and casually abduct him to Dame Triamour's splendid pavilion. The beautiful Fairy Queen declares her love for the knight, and he returns her affection. She gives him a purse which always contains gold, and a horse and magical servant; she also promises to visit Launfal so long as he keeps their love a secret. Launfal returns to town, regains the favor of the people, and wins a tournament in his honor. He is later challenged by Sir Valentine, and triumphs with the help of his magical servant. Arthur recalls Launfal, and while he visits,

⁶ The action contained in these lines is the description of Orfeo's journey (325-54), his admittance to the court (355-96), and the fairy king's rash promise (425-47).

Guinevere proclaims her love for him. Launfal refuses her, and in anger she accuses him of not loving any woman. Launfal replies that he loves Triamour, and that his lady's serving maids are more beautiful than she. The queen calls Launfal to trial for the insult; only the unlikely appearance of Triamour may rescue him. At the trial, twenty beautiful maidens arrive, followed by Triamour who blinds Guinevere with her breath, and the fairy procession takes Launfal back to Avalon, where the knight may be seen by mortals only once a year.

SL's narrative complexity arises in that Launfal, downtrodden and poor, is not abducted into the fairy realm; instead, Dame Triamour coaxes Launfal to her pavilion located in the mortal world. No fantastic journey to a distant kingdom takes place, nor is there any indication that Launfal has been magically transported:

And when they come in the forest an high,
A paviloun y-teld he sigh,
With merthe and mochel honoure.

(ll.262-4)

Launfal's rescue likewise occurs in the mortal realm, at the court of King Arthur; indeed, he is delivered by his fairy love from the punishment of the scheming mortal Guinevere. Therefore, unlike the rescues previously discussed where the victim is taken to the fairy realm and retrieved in order to rejoin their fellow mortals, Launfal is saved from his doom in the human realm and delivered to the fairy land of Dame Triamour:

The lady rod thorough Kardevyle,
Fere in to a jolif ile,
Oliroun that highte.

(ll.1001-3)

Both its source, Marie de France's "Lanval," and the English version contain such an ending, but where the end of the

English poem varies from the French is in that Launfal is not whisked away forever. The knight may still be seen by mortals:

Every yere upon a certain day,
Me may here Launfales stede nay
And him se with sight.

(11.1021-6)

The spectrum of subject treatment is complete with the complex approach to the fairy abduction and rescue taken in SL. All four works deal with the folk matter in differing degrees of length and intricacy, from the shortened tale in the ballads to the more extensive artistic treatment in the lai romances.

In examining the manipulation of the fairy abduction or retrieval in each of the works' plots, it becomes apparent that they may be distinguished according to the fairy presence's prominence. TL and SO are similar in that the actions of the fairies are primary to the composition of the subject matter. As was noted earlier, TL contains a parallel structure, the corresponding episodes dealing with Tam Lin's rescue:

'But the night is Halloween, lady,
The morn is Hallowday;
Then win me, win me, an ye will,
For weel I wat ye may...

(A, v.25)

Sae weel she minded whae he did say,
And young Tam Lin did win;
Syn e coverd him wi her green mantle,
As blythe's a bird in spring

(A, v.39)

Previous to the explanation and rescue contained between

these two verses, what appears is background information pertaining to why Janet desires the freedom of Tam Lin; she is pregnant with Tam Lin's child. Thus, the rescue of the fairy victim stands at the focal point of the ballad.

SO shares with TL the distinction of having the abduction and rescue as central to the plot. All action that takes place in the series of events in SO may be traced back to the fairy presence, as in TL. Orfeo's ten years of wandering (ll.240), his own journey to the fairy realm, and even his return to court are all motivated only by the actions of the fairy king.

Abduction and retrieval, however, do not represent the primary complication in TR and SL. In SL, the knight's predicament is foreshadowed at the marriage of King Arthur and Guinevere, when the new queen shows her disfavor for Launfal by giving gifts to all but him:

Everich knight she yaf broche other ring,
But Sir Launfal she yaf no thing-
That grevede him many a sithe.
(ll.70-2)

From these lines to the concluding trial, the primary complication in plot exists as a part of the human realm; Guinevere's false accusations place the hero in jeopardy, making the conflict of the narrative entirely contained within Arthur's mortal court. The abduction and fairy presence, therefore, have little to do with the story's primary predicament until the hero must be rescued at the conclusion.

As in SL, TR also carries the fairy abduction as a secondary event, but the primary focus of the ballad is much more subtle than in the lai of SL. In surveying the five versions of TR collected by Child, the larger part of all the variants consists of the description of the journey to Elfland, not the event of Thomas's capture.⁷ The actual abduction by the Fairy Queen is further minimized by Thomas's nonchalant attitude toward the fairy's warning:

'Harp and carp, Thomas,' she said,
 'Harp and carp along wi me;
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
 Sure of your bodie I will be.'

'Betide me weal, betide me woe,
 That weird shall never daunton me;'
Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,
 All underneath the Eildon Tree.

(C, v.5-6)

With the seizure of Thomas functioning as a backdrop for the description of a journey to Elfland, a similarity to the framework of TL must be noted; both ballads begin with a lengthy passage of situational information, followed by the primary episodes of the respective works. This similarity to the structure of TL revalidates the primacy of the journey in the ballad of TR by highlighting the central events, for as in TL, primary events are framed by situational exposition.

Beyond the abduction and rescue's plot functions, the fairy presence also serves to illuminate the settings of the

⁷ Corresponding verses are: A, v.6-15; B, v.6-11; C, v.8-16; D (app.1), v.1-7; E (app.2), v.9-17.

four narratives. TR presents a primary example of the supernatural realm functioning as setting; after being abducted, Thomas Rymer's journey to Elfland presents a vivid and frequently horrific description of the area through which the two travelled:

O they rade on, and farther on,
And they waded thro rivers aboon the knee,
And they saw neither sun nor moon,
But they heard the roaring of the sea.

It was a mirk, mirk night, and there was nae stern
light,
And they waded thro red blude to the knee;
For a' the blude that's shed on earth
Rins thro the springs o that countrie.
(C, v.15-16)

This description and its corresponding variations so explicitly depict certain folk beliefs connected with Elfland that one may surmise that in TR, the fantastic setting is being showcased through Thomas's abduction and journey.⁸

The settings of TL and SL, unlike that of TR, have less to do with the characters' physical surroundings and more to do with the inhabitants of the fairy court itself. TL presents only scanty information concerning the scene at Carterhaugh; it may be assumed that it is a wooded area (B6, C2, D1-2), that there are flowers about (A5, B5, C2, D4, E2-3, F2, H5, I7), and that Tam Lin and Janet meet at a well

⁸ Corresponding descriptions are: A, v.7; B, v.6; E (app.2), v. 9-10). I do not include the descriptions of the three roads which appear in all variants in my survey of verses, but they most certainly must be noted.

(A4, B4, I6). But beyond these generalized surroundings, the descriptions that add "color" to this undetailed setting are those of the fairy court's ride at Tam Lin's rescue. Janet is told to let the darkness of the black and brown knights pass, and to cover Tam Lin, the white steed's rider, with her green mantle.⁹ Against the indistinct setting of Carterhaugh, the colors of the fairy troop, however drab, create the presence of the fairy court which provides a large part of the setting's detail.

SL shares the colorful function of the fairy court with TL, but its utilization as a major factor in the setting is isolated to the scene of Launfal's rescue. The twenty maidens who arrive in Arthur's court previously to Triamour act as an elaborate backdrop for the arrival of their mistress, and as in TL, they provide an array of color to herald the coming of the Queen of Fairies. The spectacle begins with ten maidens:

The barouns sawe come ridinge
Ten maidenen bright of ble.
Ham thoughte they were so bright and shene
That the lothlokest, without wene,
Hare quene than might be.
(ll. 848-52)

To these fair damsels are added another ten:

Tho saw they other ten maidenen bright,
Fairire than the other ten of sight,
As they gone him deme...
(ll. 883-5)

⁹ Every variant contains at least one of these references to color: A, v.28-35; B, v.26-9; C, v.7; D, v.18-20; E, v.9; F, v.10; G, v.35; H, v.9; I, v.37.

They were y-clotheth in samit tire;
Ech man hadde greet desire
To se hare clothinge.

(ll. 889-91)

Although the twenty maidens bear a striking contrast to the unadorned mortal court, Triamour's entrance provides even greater luster to the somber and foreboding human realm:

The lady was clad in purpere palle,
With gentil body and middil small,
That semely was of sight.
Her mantil was furrid with white ermin,
Y-reversid jolif and fin;
No richere be ne might.

Her sadel was semily set;
The sambus were grene felvet
Y-painted with imagerie.
The bordure was of belles
Of riche gold and nothing elles
That any man mighte espie.

(ll. 943-54)

The fairy court's contrasting splendor in SL and darkness in TL reflect directly on the Fairy Queen's motivations in the works; benevolence and love in SL are represented by magnificence, while in TL, blacks and browns mirror the Fairy Queen's malevolence and cruelty.

Adding yet another facet to the use of the fairy presence and abduction in the setting is Orfeo's journey to rescue his wife. The settings of both Orfeo's court and the fairy court consist of brilliant scenes; Heroudis reports of Elfland:

[The Fairy King] brought me to his palais,
Wele atird in ich ways,
And shewed me castles and tours,
Rivers, forestes, firth and flours,
And his riche stedes ichon.

(ll. 133-7)

Through music, Orfeo's castle seems equally as splendid:

In the castel the steward sat atte mete,
There were trompours and tabourers,
Harpours fele and crouders.

(11.495-7)

The detail that distinguishes the two realms, though, is the hideous courtyard through which Orfeo must pass on his journey to the fairy realm. The descriptive passage is organized as a catalog of gruesome figures:

Sum stode withouten hade
And sum non armes nade,
And sum thurch the body hadde wounde,
And sum lay wode, y-bounde,
And sum armed on hors sete,
And sum astranled as they ete,
And sum were in water adreint,
And sum with fire all forshreint.
Wives ther lay on child-bedde,
Sum ded and sum awedde;
And wonder fele ther lay bisides,
Right as they slepe her undertides.

(11. 367-78)

As Dorena Allen wrote, "nothing could be more hideously unexpected than this assembly of maimed and suffering figures" (103), but their function in the setting's description is clear -- they mark the fairy realm, however bright and impressive, as a repulsive place, and one from which any captive must be saved. Thus, concluding with the examination of SO, it becomes apparent that in all four of the works, the magnificence of the setting reflects the demeanor of the fairies in the abduction or rescue; TR and SL represent an innocuous kidnapping and the setting in each conveys a sense of wonder and splendor, while the forced capture in SO and the violent rescue of TL are indicated in

their dark colors and grotesque descriptions.

The third literary device in which the fairy presence and abductions play a major role is that of character and its development. As characters in their own rights, the fairy royalty which appear in the ballads and lais often hover at the border between an active and passive role. In SL, Triamour's fairy abilities are never fully examined save in the purse, invisible servant, and steed she bestows on Launfal (ll. 319-33); otherwise, her station as Launfal's lover is more often referred to than her role as fairy:

And every day Dame Triamour,
She com to Sir Launfal boure
Aday when hit was night.

(ll. 499-501)

In contrast, TR's Fairy Queen reverses the active and passive roles of Triamour; the Queen warns Thomas that if he kisses her, he must become her lover:

'Harp and carp, Thomas,' she said,
'Harp and carp along wi me,
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your bodie I will be.'

(C, v.5)¹⁰

But once Thomas does kiss her, no further mention of the Fairy Queen's role as lover is made. Her active role then becomes that of a guide through the wonders of their journey:

'Light down, light down, now, True Thomas,
And lean your head upon my knee;
Abide and rest a little space,

¹⁰ A break in A and D (app.1) versions occur at this point, but the passage is intact in E (app.2), v.5.

And I will shew you ferlies three.

(C, v.10)¹¹

In this, the ballad's Fairy Queen is unlike the lai's, for the Queen's role as a supernatural being is emphasized in the ballad, while Triamour's love for Launfal carries the more significance in the lai.

The functions of the Fairy Queen in TL and the Fairy King in SO are more difficult to define, primarily due to their absence from the narrative action. In TL, there is no indication that the Fairy Queen is the cause of Tam Lin's predicted transformations during his rescue; therefore, claiming that the Queen is an active defender of her captive would be to assume too much. The only action executed by the Queen is that of words of threatening regret:

Out then spak the Queen o Fairies,
And an angry woman was she:
'Shame betide her ill far'd face,
And an ill death may she die,
For she's taen awa the boniest knight
In a' my companie.

(A, v.41)¹²

The Fairy King in SO is likewise absent from the immediate action; his direct contact with Dame Heroudis related to the reader secondhand (ll.109-50), the capture of the Queen contained within four brief lines (ll.167-70), and the King's indifferent rash promise (ll.425-8) join together to

¹¹ Corresponding verses are A, v.11; B, v.9; D (app.1), v. 5-6; E (app.2), v.13.

¹² Corresponding verses are B, v.38-41; D, v.33-4; E, v.21; F, v.17; H, v.13-5; I, v.53-5.

form a passive role even in light of Heroudis's abduction.

One would be hard pressed to label the Fairy King in SO as an antagonist considering his abovementioned passive function, but he does represent that which has created the complication in SO. The Fairy Queen in TR is equally difficult to categorize, but again, Thomas's journey would not have occurred if the Queen were not "hunting" for him. The broadest form of the definition of antagonist applies in these cases, namely that of a character who constructs the complication contained in the narrative.

TL also proves to be a difficulty in concluding which character represents the antagonist. John D. Niles concisely sums up Janet's role as follows:

"Although the song takes its name from its male hero, Janet is the true protagonist. On her our attention is centered from beginning to end, and we see the action through her eyes."

(345)

As previously stated, the Fairy Queen does not overtly take part in the attempt to retain Tam Lin, but because of his postscripted abduction, she clearly becomes that which Janet the protagonist must defeat if she is to win her love.

The protagonist/antagonist relationship in SL is much clearer than in the three other works; it cannot be denied that the cause of the complication in the lai is the machinations of Queen Guinevere. The labelling of characters becomes difficult in this case when determining the protagonist. Launfal is most decidedly the heroic focus

of the narrative, but it is Triamour's actions that vanquish the scheming Guinevere. In light of this structure, both Launfal and Triamour are protagonists, with the mortal queen also serving as their temperamental and unscrupulous foil.

But to declare that SL contains a joint protagonist structure denies the intricate role of Dame Triamour. Not only do her gifts and presence thwart Guinevere's cruelty, but they also aid in the development of Launfal's character. When Launfal is poor and downtrodden, Triamour's maidens appear:

Launfal dichte his courser
Withoute knave other squier.
He rood with litill pride;
His hors slod and fel in the fen,
Wherefore him scornede many men
Aboute him fere and wide...

As he sat in sorow and sore
He sawe come out of holtes hore
Gentil maidenenes two.

(11.211-6, 229-31)

Triamour gives him gifts and her love, which in his days away from Arthur's court rebuild his self confidence and stature:

To many men he dede honours
In countreys fere and nere.

Alle the lordes of Karlyoun
Lette crie a turnament in the toun
For love of Sir Launfel
(And for Blaunchard his good stede)
To wite how him wold spede
That was y-made so well.

(11.431-8)

Triamour becomes Launfal's guardian, even when he breaks the taboo placed on his speaking of their love; she arrives at

Launfal's trial in the fashion of the Greek deus ex machina
to save him:

And as the Quene spak to the King,
The barouns seigh come ridinge
A damsele alone
Upon a white comely palfrey.

(11.925-28)

To label Triamour as simply a protagonist, therefore, is extremely restrictive; in her, the captor and rescuer are enmeshed in the guise of a fairy guardian and lover.

Such complexity of function characterizes the artfulness of the fairy presence in the ballads and lais. Abductions and retrievals not only provide the structure of the plot, but the fairies also contribute detail and color to otherwise indistinct settings and supply one half of the protagonist/antagonist relationship within the narratives. To deny the intricate manipulation of the fairy abductions is to ignore the depth of comprehension that was required to create the works, and to do so not only belittles the works' technical craftsmanship, but also diminishes their value as fundamental works of medieval literature.

Chapter 3

The Abductions

Beyond their literary craftsmanship, the four ballads and lais also contain a varied and extensive amount of popular fairy belief and custom surrounding the abductions and rescues. The abductions in particular hold many similarities in structure and detail which may be traced to the common fairy lore of the European countries, and which reflect the medieval audience's interest in the fairy realm.

Even so rudimentary a theme as the motivation for the abduction finds its roots in tales of medieval popular culture. Stories abound in which a mortal, most often a young and handsome man, falls in love with one of the fairy race; the Gwragedd Annwn (water fairies), Leanan-Sidhe (vampire fairy), the Glastig (water-vampire), and the Selkies (sea-seal fairies) are just a small few of the varieties of fairies whose every account deals with a mortal's infatuation (Froud and Lee). None of these sub-races appear in the four ballads and lais by name, but the "fairy mistress" theme plainly characterizes the motivations for the abductions contained in TR and SL.

In an examination of the motivations of the abductions in TL and SO, one may not assume such a fairy lover motif with any amount of certainty. In the concluding stanzas of TL, the Fairy Queen does not speak of Tam Lin as a lover, but as a knight of her court:

Then out then spak the Queen o Fairies,
Out o a bush o broom:
'They that hae gotten young Tom Line
Hae got a stately groom.'

Out then spak the Queen o Fairies,
Out o a bush o rye:
'Them that has gotten young Tom Line
Has the best knight in my company.'
(B, v.38-9)¹³

Exclusively representing part of the fairy court is likewise true for Heroudis. When Orfeo first sees her, Heroudis is part of the hunting party who take her away after seeing him (11.295-305), and while in the fairy realm, she is solely referred to as simply being asleep under an ympe tree:

Ther he seighe his owen wif,
Dame Herodis, his lef lif,
Slepe under an ympe-tree.
(11.381-3)

"Sir," he said, "ich biseche thee
Thatou woldest yive me
That ich levedy, bright on ble,
That slepeth under the ympe-tre."
(11.429-32)

With much conjecture and guesswork, one may be able to build a case for the fairy lover motif, but it can only be a superficial case for textually, there is no explicit evidence to strongly support that the abductions in TL and SO were thus influenced.

In contrast to these two works, the fairy mistress theme in TR and SL is distinct as a primary motive for the heroes' captures. When Launfal beholds the splendor of Dame Triamour and her pavilion, her first and only words are

¹³ Corresponding verses are: A, v.40; F, v.17; I, v.52-3.

those of love and love-tokens:

She seide, "Launfal, my lemman swete,
Al my joye for the I lete,
Sweting paramour.
Ther nis no man in Cristente
That I love so moche as the,
King neither emperoure!"
(11.301-6)

"...If thou wilt truly to me take
And alle wemen for me forsake,
Riche I will make the..."
(11.316-8)

Throughout the lai, Launfal's role in relation to Triamour is that of beloved, comparable to Triamour's role, as was discussed in the previous chapter.¹⁴ With the primary characters' dominant functions appearing thus, the abduction's motivation being that of the fairy mistress motif is unquestionable.

Many of the abductions in the variants of TR also imply that the love of the Fairy Queen is the motive for Thomas's capture as well, but whether the fairy mistress theme is primary or secondary depends on the particular variant. Because of the damaged blocks of manuscript, A and D are uncertain on this point, but versions C and E clearly state that the Fairy Queen becomes Thomas's love:

...Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,
All underneath the Eildon Tree.
(C, v.6)

'Now gin ye kiss my mouth, Thomas,
Ye mouna miss my fair bodee;
Then ye may een gang hame and tell
That ye've lain wi a gay ladee.'

¹⁴ See p.17

'O gin I loe a lady fair,
Nae ill tales o her wad I tell,
And it's wi thee I fain wad gae,
Tho it were een to heavn or hell.'
(E, v.6-7)

Analogues of the TR structure of the fateful kiss exist in the tales of the Leanan-Sidhe and the Glastig, but with far more disastrous results. Katherine Briggs writes of the Lhiannan-shee,¹⁵ "...if [a mortal] yields to her seduction, he is ruined body and soul" (1976, 266), while similar results occur when a mortal is seduced to dance by the woman/goat Glastig (Froud and Lee). Therefore, not only does the kiss and subsequent capture of TR possess folktale based tradition, but so do the sensual advances of the fairies on the inhabitants of the mortal realm.

The works under consideration here collectively provide a compendium of traditional motivations for the abduction of the hero/heroine. In addition to the motif of the fairy mistress already discussed, there are many others, including the role of music, the presence of the tithe to hell, hunting, fairy "Moving Days," and trespass on sacred groves. The first of these motivations, music, is especially important in TR:

Her horse was o the dapple-gray,
And in her hands she held bells nine;
'Harp and carp, Thomas,' she said,
'For a' thae bonny bells shall be thine.'
(v.1)¹⁶

¹⁵ The Lhiannan-Shee is the Manx name for the Leanan-Sidhe.

¹⁶ Corresponding verses are: B, v.5; C, v.5; E, v.8.

Excellent music was believed to be a sure lure to the fairies, and the approach of the fairy troop was believed to be heralded by bells and music (Kendrick-Wells 139).

Another popular superstition stated that if a young girl sang alone by a lake, the water spirits would draw her down under the waves to sing in their palace (Wilde, 105-6). The priority of music as opposed to love in considering the motive for Thomas's abduction relies primarily on the order of presentation and syntactical structures surrounding the verses. In C, the verse suggests that the reason the Fairy Queen came to Thomas was for his harping, while his abduction depended upon his seduction:

'Harp and carp, Thomas,' she said,
'Harp and carp along wi me,
And if ye dare to kiss my lips,
Sure of your bodie I will be.'
(v.5)

In contrast, seduction precedes the queen's request in E, thus highlighting his ability to play and sing; Thomas disregards her warning, and then she responds:

'Then harp and carp, Thomas,' she said,
'Then harp and carp along wi me;
But it will be seven years and a day
Till ye win back to yere ain countrie.'
(v.8)

Versions B and D only report the Fairy Queen's interest in Thomas's ability to "harp and carp",¹⁷ preserving its contemporary importance as a narrative folk-element.

The most compelling and critically explored motive for

¹⁷ "Harp and carp" appears in B, v.5 and D, v.1.

the abductions in the works, though, is the mysterious teind to hell¹⁸ in TL that to modern audiences, seems to appear without explanation. Tam Lin voices his fear of the teind to Janet when she returns to Carterhaugh:

'And pleasant is the fairy land,
But, an eerie tale to tell,
Aye at the end of seven years
We pay a tiend to hell;
I am sae fair and fu o flesh,
I'm feared it be mysel...'
(A, v.24)¹⁹

Many folk researchers agree that his apprehension is well founded; Lowry Charles Wimberly summarizes a Scottish belief that existed independently of the ballads concerning such fairy abductions:

As a consequence of having at stated intervals to pay this tax, tithe, or teind to hell, the fairies...were accustomed to abduct earthly folk, whom they offered up as tribute to the fiend, a fine which must otherwise have been met by sacrificing one of their own order.
(323)

Wimberly's report further explains the final verse of H, after Tam Lin has been set free:

Up bespack the Queen of Fairies
And she spak wi a loud yell:
'Aye at every seven year's end
We pay the kane to hell, tithe
And the koors they hae gane round about, years
And I fear it will be mysel.'
(v.15)

The words of the Queen of Fairies support the connection

¹⁸ "Teind," according to Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is the Scottish equivalent of "tithe."

¹⁹ Corresponding verses are: B, v.23; C, v.5; D, v.15; G, v.28; I, v.32.

between the ballad and the folk tradition, for the sudden fear for herself discloses the nature of Tam Lin's role as sacrifice to the devil.

The presence of the tithe to hell motif invites the further discussion of the popular belief in the relationship between hell and the fairy realm, conceived of as a purgatory-like domain. The Irish believed that the fairies were "...fallen angels who had not descended as low as hell, and they might on this account be thought to owe allegiance to Lucifer" (Lyle 1969, 181). TL and TR best convey these beliefs, TL illustrating the lord/vassal relationship in the form of the seven-year tithe just examined, and TR, by presenting the three roads on Thomas's journey, depicting Fairyland's medial existence between heaven and hell. In each of the TR variants, the paths to heaven, hell, and Elfland are explained to Thomas by the queen:

'O see you not yon narrow road,
So thick beset wi thorns and briere?
That is the path of righteousness,
Tho after it but few enquires.

'And see not ye that braid braid road,
That lies across yon lillie leven?
That is the path of wickedness,
Tho some call it the road to heaven.

'And see not ye that bonny road,
Which winds about the fernie brae?
That is the road to fair Elfland,
Whe[re] you and I this night maun gae.
(A, v.12-4)²⁰

²⁰ Corresponding verses are: B, v.10-11; C, v.11-13; D, v.5-6; E, v.14-15. B, D, and E make no mention of the path to Elfland, but we may conjecture its appearance in B and

The balanced structure leads to the assumption that the three paths stand somewhat equal in the mortal realm, which, in turn, reflects back to the belief that the fairies are caught between the righteousness of heaven and the wickedness of hell, composing a third realm, which coupled with the belief of the tithe in TL, owes allegiance to the devil.

The most prominent connection of Elfland to hell, though, appears in the lai of SO. That the narrative of SO follows the plot of "Orpheus and Eurydice" as told by Ovid and Virgil is indisputable, but in converting the classic tale into a lai, the poet "must inevitably have changed the story still further to make it square with his own beliefs and traditions and those of his auditors" (Kittredge 1886, 185). Thus, Pluto becomes the King of the Fairies and Proserpina, Dame Heroudis. The relationship between the classical Hades and the realm of fairies was concrete enough in the Middle Ages even for Chaucer, for in the Merchant's Tale, he assumes a similar connection:

And so bifel that brighte morwetide
That in that gardin in the ferther side
Pluto, that is king of fairye,
And many a lady in his compaignye,
Folwing his wif, the queene Proserpina...
(11.981-5)²¹

E's break from the verses which mention the "ferlies three" (B v.9 and E v.13).

²¹ Selection taken from E. T. Donaldson's Chaucer's Poetry, second ed.

The dominion into which Orfeo journeys in itself carries with it archetypal allusions to hell and its inhabitants; Orfeo's first visions of the realm of fairies are filled with the slain, twisted bodies of those who were once part of the mortal realm (ll.367-78).

Such a catalog of the slain, in the classical Dantean realm, implies that the realm is indeed hell, but in SO, the poet softens the certainty of this assumption by incorporating yet another fairy belief:

Of folk that were thider y-brought
And thought dead and nare nought.
(ll. 365-6)

To reconcile the poet's change, one must be aware of the belief that "many, perhaps most, of those who were thought to die were in reality no more dead than Orfeo's stolen Heroudis" (Allen, 104). In the final agonies before death, it was believed that the fairies seize the stricken and leave a figure of wood or straw in the place of the dying mortal; the "taken" then live thereafter in the realm of the fairies (Allen, 104). TL may subtly be associated with SO in this, for in three of the variants, Tam Lin states that it was when he fell, perhaps fatally, from his hunting horse that the Queen of Fairies abducted him.²² In the simple statement of SO's grotesque figures' survival of death, the domain into which the hero journeys becomes typically fairy-

²² Corresponding verses are: A, v.23; B, v.22-23; I, v.30-31.

like, emphasizing the Celticity of the classical tale.

Also in the lai, Orfeo must travel underground to rescue his abducted wife, further solidifying the connection of the fairy realm to the Christian concept of hell through its location:

In at a roche the levedis rideth
And he thereafter and nought abideth.
When he was in the roche y-go,
Wele three mile other mo,
He com into a fair cuntray...

(11.323-7)

The idea of Fairyland being underground is not limited to the lai or medieval thought; not only does Tam Lin report that he was taken "In yon green hill to dwell" (A, v.23), but even today sites such as Ogo Hole in Shropshire, Peak Cavern in Derbyshire, and Wolf Pits in Suffolk claim to possess the entrance to Fairyland (Kittredge 1886, 194). The mytho-history of Ireland also supports the underground realm belief, for the Irish "Sidhe", formerly the Tuatha de Dannan, were banished to the places beneath the rocks and waves by the conquering Milesians (MacManus, 10).

The appearance of a body of water in the two ballads likewise reflects another traditional location of Fairyland; Howard Rollin Patch observes that nearly every journey to the Otherworld is across an expanse of water (1918, 627). TR relates the journey to Fairyland, including the crossing of water:

It's she has rode, and Thomas ran,
Until they cam to yon water clear;
He's coosten off his hose and shon,

And he's wooden the water up to the knee.
(B, v.6)²³

In variants A and C of TR, the pair wade through blood instead of water, but the sea is heard throughout their journey. The further belief that the fairy realm was on an island may be traced to the sea-god Manannan mac Lir, for the Isle of Man stood under his protection (Briggs 1976, 280); a similar supernatural mythic island may be found in Morte Darthur, when Arthur is placed upon a barge and taken to Avalon by the feé (Malory, 716). According to old Irish manuscripts, the Celtic Otherworld was located in the midst of the western ocean, more commonly called Tir ná Nóg, or the Land of Youth (Evans-Wentz, 333-4).

This concept of the fairy realm residing in the west was not lost on the creator of SL. The poet announces the appearance of Dame Triamour:

He fond in the paviloun
The kinges daughter of Olyroun,
 Dame Triamour that highte.
Here fadir was King of Fairie
Of Occient, fere and nyie,
 A man of mochel mighte.

(ll.277-82)

Sands points to the rare word "occient," and finds that in Middle English, the term may be defined as 'the west' (211, n.281)[^], and Patch notes that the Otherworld of the Celts was located on the earth, and indeed, most often in the west (1950, 27). Thus the locations of the fairy realm differ in

²³ Corresponding verses are: A, v.7; C, v.15; E, v.9-10.

each of the works where its setting is mentioned, SO underground, TR over water, and SL in the west, but all cases are complimentary to the folk beliefs of the British Isles.

Having examined the destinations of the four abductions, let us now turn to exploring the additional motives behind the fairies' appearances in the mortal realm. Granted, it may be argued that the reason the fairy royalty appears to the mortals is that they have come to capture a man or woman for their court, but the folk beliefs surrounding the fairies' arrival clouds such a bold statement. The King and Queens indeed arrive in the narrative to perform the abduction, but some of the details given in the ballads and lais are rooted in the folk traditions concerning the times when the fairies may be encountered in the mortal realm.

What seems to be a favored mortal-realm pastime of the fairies, hunting, is directly connected with the tradition of the Fairy Rade. The Daoine Sidhe of Ireland and the Seelie Court of Scotland are the supernatural groups who are traditionally depicted in large hunting processions that enter the mortal domain, with the troop's courtly hierarchy apparent to any that see them (Froud and Lee). Such, it would seem, are the king and court which stole Dame Heroudis from under the ympe tree in SO. In the first contact of the fairies with Heroudis, she reports that two well-dressed

knights approached her and bade her to speak with their king (ln.111-4); when she refuses, the King of Fairies goes to her with one hundred knights and another hundred damsels, all on white steeds (ll. 118-121). The image of the Fairy Rade is reinforced during Orfeo's first encounter with Heroudis after ten years:

The King o Fairy with his rout
Com to hunt him all about
With dim cry and blowring,
The houndes also with him berking...
(11.259-62)

And otherwhile he might him see
As a gret ost by him te
Wele atourned ten hundred knightes,
Ich y-armed to his rights...
(11.265-8)

Where the lai's Rade does not correspond to the popular belief is that the trooping fairies in folk tradition have no palace to which they return (Briggs 1976, 157), but SO's fairy troop seems to return to the beautiful place which Heroudis saw in her dream. The traditional Fairy Rade constantly hunts, jousts, and carouses, moving in between the fairy and mortal worlds. In such a discrepancy, the superimposed Celtic beliefs are made distinct, for the imperfection of the narrative distinguishes the Palace of Hades in classical tradition and the Fairy Rade of Celtic custom.

In TR, only E version clearly suggests that the Queen of Fairies is hunting when she approaches Thomas, although beyond the description of her clothing and adornments, no

mention is made of her activity at Huntlie bank. The verse containing her description begins as do her descriptions in the other applicable variants, but ends uniquely with the accessories of the hunt:

Her mantle was o velvet green,
And a' set round wi jewels fine;
Her hawk and hounds were at her side,
And her bugle-horn in gowd did shine.
(E, v.3)²⁴

Hawk, hounds, and horn are clear indications of her hunting activity, but because they appear only superficially in E and in no other variant, their presence may be accorded to the creator's poetic indulgence, albeit correctly corresponding to popular fairy tradition.

Finally, hunting also appears in some variants of the TL abduction, but as is the case with a number of popular fairy beliefs in the ballad, the action is misplaced on a character from the contrasting realm. When Tam Lin recounts his capture for Janet, it is he who was hunting, and not necessarily the Fairy Queen:

'Ance it fell upon a day,
A cauld day and a snell,
When we were frae the hunting come,
That from my horse I fell.

'The Queen of Fairies she came by,
Took me wi her to dwell...
(B, v.22-3)²⁵

In and of itself, such an action of a mortal should not

²⁴ Corresponding verses to the velvet mantle are: A, v.2 and C, v.2.

²⁵ Corresponding verses are: A, v.23; D, v.13-4; I, v.29-30.

receive any distinction in a discussion of the tradition of the fairy hunt, but coupled with the discrepancies surrounding Tam Lin's rescue as will be discussed in chapter 4,²⁶ his sport at the time of his abduction must at the least be acknowledged in a discussion of the fairy hunt.

Yet another occasion when folk beliefs hold that a mortal may be affected by the fairies is on either of the two fairy "Moving Days," May or November eve. These two days marked the pagan transitions of the year, November 1, Samhain, being the festival of the dead at the beginning winter and May 1, Beltaine, marking the rebirth of spring (Buck, 92). The fairies were thought to move their court from one location to another at the stroke of midnight, having to travel through the mortal realm on their journey, and thus having great power over man; on these days, they were thought to steal unprotected children and cattle in their crossing (Wilde, 114). SO takes advantage of this folk holiday in that Heroudis is abducted on May 1:

Bifell so in the comessing of May,
When miry and hot is the day,
And oway beth wintershours...
(11.33-5)

This ich Quen, Dame Herodis,
Tok two maidens of priis
And went in an undrentide
To play by an orchardside-...
(11.39-42)

That the Fairy King in SO had no apparent motive for

²⁶ See p.55-57

Heroudis's abduction has already been explored;²⁷ the situation surrounding the capture, and that she was celebrating the rebirth of the year on the fairy's Moving Day, may have been enough to spark popular imagination in connecting the lai to the folk embellishment of the fairy lure.

That Heroudis fell asleep under an ympe tree also proves to be motivation for her fairy abduction, not only in SO, but in the other lai and ballads as well. Constance Bullock-Davies explores the development of the words ympe tree in SO, and finds that this type of tree possibly corresponds to a sapling sprouting from an older tree's root, but in tracing the term to its origins, she argues that it is a mistranslation of the Breton word ente, which represents the older nante, meaning garden or orchard (7). In such a mistranslation, though, either the correct or incorrect gives support to the fairy abduction beliefs, for in either interpretation, "Heroudis was, in ancient terms, committing a sacrilege" in her trespass (Bullock-Davies, 9).

Many other critics of the lai equate the ympe tree with an apple or grafted apple tree (Wimberly, 313). The apple tree has a long tradition in fairy belief; the magic silver wand of Manannan mac Lir, the staves of fairy guides appearing to mortals as old men (Evans-Wentz, 343), and peels used in divination all enter popular belief from the

²⁷ See p.22-23

sacred apple tree motif (Briggs 1969, 84). Arthurian literature also displays the otherworldliness of the apple tree in that when Lancelot was carried away by the four fairy queens, he was asleep under a grafted apple tree, and that Avalon, or Apple-Land, represents the most widely known name of the fairy realm (Briggs 1969, 84). In one of its variants, TL was also abducted while asleep under an apple tree:

'Ae fatal morning I went out,
Dreading nae injury,
And thinking lang, fell soun asleep,
Beneath an apple tree.

'Then by it came the Elfin Queen,
And laid her hand on me;
And from that time since ever I mind,
I've been in her companie.

(G, v.26-7)

In TR, the apple tree has textually been lost, but Child examines the derivation of the romance "Thomas of Erceldoune" in "Ogier le Danois" and finds that the "semely" ["derne," "cumly"] tree that is present in the romance appears as an apple tree in the tale of Ogier (I, 340).

References to a tree have not been totally lost in the recorded variants of the ballad, though. The descriptions of the tree under which Thomas is resting before his abduction are identical and appear in variants B, C, and E,²⁸ but the description is in no way as clear as it initially appears. The Eildon Tree, possibly due to its

²⁸ Corresponding verses are: B, v.1; C, v.1; E, v.17.

initial capital letters, to a modern reader seems to be a certain variety of tree, such as an apple or hawthorn, but the word eildon is defined in Webster's Collegiate Dictionary as the Scottish variation of eld, meaning old or aged. Because of the oral nature of the ballads, the assumption that the tree was of a certain species depends entirely on the transcription's capital letters in Child's collection; otherwise, the tree from which Thomas was abducted is simply an old tree, venerable in its representation of nature and its mystical components.

In SL, Launfal is similarly resting under an unspecified tree when he first encounters the members of Triamour's court:

Thus sat the knight in symplité
In the shadwe under a tre,
Ther that him likede beste.

As he sat in sorow and sore
He sawe come out of holtes hore
Gentil maidenenes two.

(ll.226-31)

The brevity of the transition between Launfal sitting in the shadow of the tree and the appearance of the two maidens implies that Launfal's rest under the tree was the anticipated signal to the fairy court that Triamour's love had arrived. Thus in SL, SO, and a number of variants of TL and TR, to tarry in the shade of a tree was a sure indication that the sleeper would soon be abducted.

Nature as a fairy summons is also made clear in another aspect of the TL narrative; when Janet goes to Carterhaugh,

she does not see Tam Lin at the well until she breaks off a flower from a nearby bush:

When she came to Carterhaugh
Tam Lin was at the well,
And there she fand his steed standing,
But away was himsel.

She had na pu'd a double rose,
A rose but only twa,
Till up then started young Tam Lin,
Says, "Lady, thou's pu nae mae...
(A, v.4-5)²⁹

She repeats the action when she returns to the enchanted Carterhaugh after she has returned to her home, pregnant with Tam Lin's child. The disturbance of nature, such as pulling a rose, connects the pagan, nature worshipping religions of nearly every culture to the supernatural; Wimberly cites the grove of Diana at Arcadia and the German dwarf Laurin as analogues of this sacred wood motif in TL (314).

A mortal's presence on the fairy Moving Days, sleep under a sacred tree, and the disturbance of nature by no means represent the complete motive for the four fairy abductions. What is represented in these details, however, is a type of handbook of how to avoid being taken by the fairies according to popular folk belief.

But what exactly does happen once a mortal has been abducted by the fairy royalty? The four ballads and lais contain similar traditions concerning the stipulations of

²⁹ Corresponding verses are: B, v.5; C, v.2; D, v.4; E, v.2-3; F, v.2; G, v.4; H, v.5; I, v.7.

the captures as well. Primarily, according to otherworld traditions of many cultures, taboos on eating, drinking, and speaking are placed on the victim, not necessarily for the good of the fairies but more commonly to protect the captive. Like the pomegranate in the myth of Proserpina and the three-hundred year captivity of Ossian, the food of the fairy otherworld contains the ability to magically enchant mortals so that they may never leave (Froud and Lee).

Thomas encounters such food in TR:

And they rade on and on, I wiss,
Till they came to a garden green;
He reached his hand to pu an apple,
For lack of fruit he was like to tyne.

'Now had your hand, Thomas,' she said,
'Had your hand and go wi me;
That is the evil fruit o hell,
Beguiled man and women in your countrie.
(D, v.3-4)³⁰

The Fairy Queen has with her a loaf of bread and bottle of wine for Thomas, suggesting that his abduction was premeditated and that the Queen has every intention to keep Thomas alive and release him at the end of the agreed upon seven years. If Thomas had eaten the fruit and dared to return to the mortal realm years later like Ossian, setting foot on mortal soil would cause his eternal youth to fade, and the years spent in the fairy realm would physically appear (Briggs 1976, 399).

What seems to be the most common taboo in fairy lore,

³⁰ Corresponding verses are: A, v.8-9; B, v.7-8; E, v.11-12.

however, is that of speech; the fairies being so reclusive a race, according to popular belief, warrants such safeguards as never properly naming the race aloud or speaking of them with due reverence (Briggs 1976, 127). In TR, Thomas is fervently warned against speaking to the fairy court when he and the Queen return to Elfland:

'But Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,
Whatever you may hear or see,
For gin ae word you should chance to speak,
You will neer get back to your ain countrie.'
(A, v.15)

The corresponding verses in all of the variants highlight the propriety of such a taboo,³¹ but as Lyle notes, as a story element, the taboo of silence in TR is "merely vestigial" (1973, 248).

The silence taboo in SL, on the other hand, is the narrative device which creates the suspense in the lai. There is only one restriction placed on Launfal in return for Triamour's love:

"But of o thing, Sir Knight, I warne the
That thou make no bost of me
For no kennes mede.
And if thou dost, I warny the before,
All my love thou hast forlore!"
And thus to him she seide.
(ll.361-6)

Launfal thwarts the advances of Guinevere by breaking the taboo (ll.694-9), but in doing so, Launfal disregards the command of Triamour, the consequence being that he will

³¹ Corresponding verses are: B, v.12; C, v.14; D, v.7; E, v.16.

never see her again. In SL, then, silence becomes a test of Launfal's devotion to Triamour's desires which he fails. In this case as in TR, the taboos of eating and speaking do not necessarily serve to protect the fairy presence or to control the captive, but instead, each functions as either a practical lover's test as in SL, or protects the victim as in TR, thus reestablishing the benevolence of the Fairy Queen in each abduction.

The fairy abduction, with its similar motifs appearing in the four ballads and lais, encapsulates a segment of ancient fairy tradition. Besides representing practical guidebook in avoiding a fate similar to that of the four victims, the folk traditions provide modern readers with a glimpse into the basic cultural beliefs of the audience of the works. Their appreciation of the supernatural reveals the awe with which they esteem the world, and the abduction of a fellow mortal allows for a vicarious immersion into the wonder of the fairy realm.

Chapter 4 The Rescues

In an examination of the rescues contained in the four works, it becomes apparent that, unlike the shared traditions in the abductions, the four rescues show no overlap of fairy belief. Because each of the rescues is different in terms of the included fairy lore, this study will explore each rescue individually, giving special attention to the relevance of the rescues' folk traditions within the plots.

In the least complex of the four works' rescues, one may find it difficult to classify the final event as a "rescue." The implication in TR is that Thomas is more simply "restored" to the mortal realm in the final verses of the ballad:

He has gotten a coat of even cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,
And till seven years were gane and past,
True Thomas on earth was never seen.
(C, v.20)³²

Child's E is the only version which suggests that Thomas is being saved from any type of harm:

'Ilka seven years, Thomas,
We pay our teindings unto hell,
And ye'er sae leesome and sae strang
That I fear, Thomas, it will be yeresell.'
(v.18)

In the Fairy Queen's concern for Thomas's well being, she

³² Corresponding verses to the release are: A, v.16; C, v.20. D, v.11 implies Thomas's restoration.

solidifies her role as a benevolent character, while incorporating the teind to hell which was discussed in the previous chapter.³³

Her concern also reveals the probable reason for the ballad's creators in choosing seven years for Thomas's time of service:

'But ye maun go wi me now, Thomas,
True Thomas, ye maun go wi me,
For ye maun serve me seven years,
Thro weel or wae as may chance to be.'
(A, v.5)³⁴

The source of the ballad, "Thomas of Erceldoune," does not contain any reference to seven years; instead, he goes with her for "thre yere and more" (v.56). The Fairy Queen in the romance, though, also releases Thomas because of the tithe mentioned in Child's E.³⁵ This being the case, in the transmission of the ballad from community to community, some earlier allusion to the devil's seven year tithe contained in the romance may have understandably been lost or altered, leaving Thomas's seven years of service as merely an indeterminate length of time for him to spend in Elfland.

In serving this length of time with the Fairy Queen, Thomas not only fulfills his bargain and gains his release, but he is also bestowed with gifts that are typical trappings of the fairies:

³³ See p.26-27

³⁴ Corresponding verses are: B, v.5; C, v.7; E, v.8.

³⁵ "Thomas of Erceldoune," v.57.

He has gotten a coat of even cloth,
And a pair of shoes of velvet green...
(A, v.16)³⁶

The references to green and velvet are made a number of times in connection with the fairies; when Thomas first sees the Fairy Queen, she is dressed in a skirt of green silk and a velvet mantle.³⁷ Even in TL and SL, green is representative of the supernatural; Dame Triamour's saddle cloths in SL are of painted green velvet (ln.950-1), and in TL, Janet's green mantle seems to depict an object of countermagical significance.³⁸ Briggs notes that popular belief held that wearing green was unlucky because of its being a fairy color, and that many Scotsmen refused to wear green at all so as not to offend the fairies (1976, 108). Thus the gift of green velvet shoes at Thomas's release would directly correspond to the appearance of the fairies in folk tradition.

The verse's initial reference to the coat of even cloth poses something of a linguistic problem; modern audiences may pay little attention to the word "even," assuming that it means simply the weave in the fabric was straight and balanced, as it appears in linen. But taking a cue from the

³⁶ Corresponding verses are: C, v.20.

³⁷ Corresponding verses are: A, v.2; C, v.2; E, v.3.

³⁸ Janet's mantle shall be discussed in depth later in this chapter, p.56-57.

reference to the fairy realm as Elfland,³⁹ an argument may be made for the word "even" being a dialectical equivalent to the term "elven".⁴⁰ The coat would therefore hold a much more mystical quality than simply being a coat of even weave fabric, and such mysticism would also coincide with the fairy tradition indicated by the velvet green shoes. With such gifts for service presented at the end of the seven years, the initial argument of TR's final verses being classified a "restoration" rather than a "rescue" is further confirmed, for there appears to have been no immediate danger to Thomas from any outside power or the Fairy Queen herself.

Like TR, SL also presents a distinctive version of the rescue motif. The circumstances surrounding the rescue of Launfal are fundamentally similar to the other works' rescues; as in the others, the victim's welfare is threatened and he cannot resolve the complication himself. What is different in SL's rescue is that the conflict takes place within the mortal realm with Queen Guinevere, so that Launfal must be saved from the doom his own realm places upon his head. The only way for Launfal to be delivered is by the appearance of Triamour, the queen of the fairy realm,

³⁹ Elfland is referred by name in: A, v.14; C, v.13.

⁴⁰ The loss of the consonant "L" may be attributed to the influence of the ON cognate "auf," which, according to the OED, was still in use during the mid-eighteenth century.

but in breaking the taboo of silence initiated by the Fairy Queen, he not only insults Guinevere, but also destroys any hope of seeing Triamour again. Launfal's salvation from the mortal conflict seems impossible.

When things seem their darkest and Guinevere calls for justice, twenty supremely beautiful maidens appear at Arthur's court, followed by Triamour. Her forgiveness of Launfal's indiscretion indicates that the taboo of silence was not a fairy charm or warning, but instead, a lover's test with no mystical motive. The lover's forgiveness represents a distinct departure from the taboos of fairy tradition; stories of the Gwragedd Annwn and their taboo against violence toward a fairy bride (Briggs 1976, 211), and Aine, whose husband was forbidden to express surprise at anything their son might do (Briggs 1976, 3), all result in the departure of the fairy lovers after the taboo was broken. Therefore, Triamour's forgiveness and appearance at Launfal's trial stand as a inventive interpretation of the character of the Fairy Queen, albeit contradictory to folk belief.

This is not to assume that Triamour has completely diverged from the sometimes spiteful folk fairy. Triamour knows the cause of Launfal's predicament, and after defending him to Arthur, :

...Dame Tryamour to the Quene geth
And blew on here swich a breth
That never eft might she se.

(ln.1006-8)

According to folk belief, a fairy's breath would not only blind its mortal victim, but also prevent that individual from ever seeing the fairies again. One of the tales collected by Thomas Keightley typifies this belief; it tells of a mortal who touches the eye-ointment of his fairy ward, sees a fairy on the road, and to escape the mortal, the fairy blows on his eyes and blinds him ("The Fary Nurseling," 310). When Triamour blinds Guinevere with her breath, then, she not only makes the mortal queen blind, but she also denies her any further contact with the supernatural. Considering that Launfal goes with Triamour to the fairy realm (ln.1035), and only on one day a year may a mortal see him with such sight as was denied Guinevere (ln.1024-6), the argument may be made that the Fairy Queen was not only exacting revenge upon Guinevere but also protecting Launfal from any further contact with her.

Launfal's rescue from the mortal realm and True Thomas's restoration represent creative manipulations of the rescue motif with a rather scanty amount of folk embellishment, but in the works with a more conventional use of the rescue from the fairies, popular belief plays a greater role, fitting much less superficially in the traditional mold.

SO represents such a treatment of the rescue motif, but the folk traditions contained in the narrative tend to center more on the dramatic elements of the rescue instead

of dealing directly with the fairy realm itself. In fact, the actions that in other circumstances are considered fairy customs are turned around to depict the rescue strategies of Orfeo. The silence of Heroudis stands as a primary example here, for in her rescue, no taboo is placed on her speech, nor is there any command for quiet. Heroudis volunteers to stay silent so as not to alarm the fairy host of her husband's presence (ln.299-303), thus employing the fairy charm of silence in TR and test of SL in the deception of the fairy initiators themselves.

Also employed against the fairies to rescue Heroudis is their love of music.⁴¹ From the first lines of the lai, King Orfeo's ability to play the harp is praised:

Orfeo most of ony thing
Lovede the gle of harping.
Siker was every gode harpoure
Of him to have moche honoure.
Himself loved for to harpe
And laide theron his wittes sharpe;
He lernid so ther nothing was
A better harper in no plas.

(ln.9-16)

As Kittredge observes, Orfeo's ability neatly conforms to the respect that the Celtic nations felt for harpers:

Every baron should have three things, said the Welsh laws - his harp, his cloak, and his chessboard...The Celts were fond of putting the harp into the hands of kings and princes.

(1886, 186)

The Roman tale of the harper Orpheus, therefore, would have had great appeal to the bards of the Celtic countries, and

⁴¹ See p.24-25

the fairies' fondness for music directly corresponds to Pluto's in the Roman myth.

To rescue his wife, Orfeo uses his musical talents to entitle him to the freedom and respect given to bards and poets in Celtic lore. The ease with which Orfeo enters the fairy realm, a task otherwise difficult to accomplish on one's own, is due to his claim at the gate:

Orfeo knocketh atte gate;
The porter was redy therate
And asked what he wold have y-do.
"Parfay," quath he, "icham a minstrel, lo!
To solas thy lord with my glee,
Yif his swete wille be."
The porter undede the gate anon
And lete him into the castel gon.

(ln.355-62)

When Orfeo arrives at the Fairy King's court and plays for him, a popular medieval motif, the rash promise, is prompted by Orfeo's excellent minstrelsy:

"Menstrel, me liketh wele thy glee;
Now aske of me what it be,
Largelich ichill thee pay.

(ln.425-7)

Orfeo asks for the woman asleep under the ympe tree (ln.429-32), and because Heroudis's silence kept secret the true identity of the minstrel, they escape unhindered from the fairy court. Thus the initial voluntary silence, the bard's freedom, and the fairy love of music work together not only as fragments of popular tradition within the narratives, but also as Orfeo's strategies against the fairies in the rescue of Dame Heroudis.

Such prominence of folk tradition as is apparent in SO

also appears in the ballad of TL, where the rescue of Tam Lin from the fairies takes narrative dominance.⁴² Fairy belief permeates nearly every action Janet must perform to save her love, but in a number of points which will be explored, the folklore has been grossly misinterpreted or carelessly confused.

Tam Lin's instructions to Janet in successfully accomplishing his rescue begin similarly in all of the variants:

'But the night is Halloween, lady,
The morn is Hallowday;
Then win me, win me, an ye will,
For weel I wat ye may.
(A, v.25)⁴³

The reference to Halloween, or Samhain by the Celtic calendar, corresponds to what takes place on Beltaine according to folk belief. As discussed in chapter 3,⁴⁴ Beltaine is the springtime fairy "Moving Day"; the date when the fairy court moves through the mortal realm to relocate their encampment, terrifying those mortals with second sight in the process.⁴⁵ The night of October 31 was Beltaine's companion holiday; it was the time when the fairies not only appeared in the mortal realm, but in their passing, they

⁴² See p.6-7

⁴³ Corresponding verses are: B, v.24; C, v.6; D, v.16; E, v.8; F, v.9; G, v.30; H, v.8; I, v.33.

⁴⁴ See p.36

⁴⁵ Lyle 1969, p.180 quotes Robert Kirk's Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, and Fairies to this effect.

also frolicked with the spirits of the dead, and played tricks on unsuspecting or unprotected mortals (Wilde, 117). Therefore, that Tam Lin's only chance of rescue is not only Samhain but at night as well,⁴⁶ directly conforms to the popular beliefs concerning that holiday.

The next instruction that Tam Lin says will take place is a series of magical transformations through which Janet must hold the young knight:

Tam lin says he will first turn into a snake/ adder/esk (A,B,C,D,E,G,H,I), then a bear/lion (A), a hound (B,E,G), and a bird (C,F,I). His final transformations will be into a naked man (B,F,G) and hot iron (A,B,D,E,G,I), afterwhich Janet must cover him with her green mantle (A,B,F), dip him in liquid (B,I), and call out his name (E).

The first transformations into wild animals may be attributed to the remains of a primitive, nature-worshipping philosophy apparent in the myths and folktales of Europe (Wimberly, 386), but the transformations into a naked man and iron cannot, for they do not represent anything of which mortals would be particularly frightened. Niles suggests that the secondary change into a naked man represents Tam Lin's "rebirth" into the mortal realm, in effect, the fairies beginning to lose control over their captive (343).

In their final desperate attempt to regain him, Tam Lin is turned in Janet's arms into "a red hat gad o iron" (B, v.32). When examined against the folklore tradition behind the ballad, this final transformation seems obviously out of

⁴⁶ The night is referred to in: A, v.26; B, v.24; D, v.17; F, v.9; G, v.32; H, v.8; I, v.33.

place, for one would expect the fairies' well known aversion to iron to prevent such an alteration from taking place (Briggs 1976, 234). Wimberly argues that the fairies, in turning Tam Lin to iron, may have merely been utilizing a device used by mortals against themselves, thus assuming that the fairies believe that mortals carry with them similar fears (387). Wimberly's point is an interesting and complex idea, but he lacks analogous tales to support his claim that supernatural creatures would use the metal in this way. The idea's complexity also presents a difficulty in one's accepting that without analogues, such a complicated concept would present itself in the simplified design of a ballad. Without a similar folk belief appearing in other popular tales, the most that one may assume concerning the fairies' use of iron in TL is that the creators of the ballad mistakenly placed the fairy fear of iron in the character of the mortal Janet. Thus the transformations in the rescue of Tam Lin end with a link between iron and the fairies, albeit an incorrectly directed one.

Janet's final instructions in the rescue may be grouped into three categories, according to the variant: covering Tam Lin with her green mantle/kirtle (A,B,F), dipping him in milk and water (B,I), and uttering the name of Tam Lin (E). The last, the power of naming, parallels the traditions of many cultures, from the familiar German fairy tale

Rumplestilzkin to its Scottish equivalent, Whuppity Stoorie (Briggs 1976, 350). Supernatural forces, these stories proclaim, may be overcome simply by saying aloud the name of the magic's object aloud. Margaret (Janet) is instructed by Tam Lin to cry his name after the transformations cease:

'They'll next shape him into your arms
Like the laidliest worm of Ind;
But hold him fast, let him not go,
And cry aye "Young Tamlin."' (E, v.14)⁴⁷

After Margaret completes this action, the Fairy Queen immediately responds to Tam Lin's loss:

The Queen of Faery turned her horse about,
Says, Adieu to thee, Tamlene!
(E, v.21)

The swiftness with which the Fairy Queen concedes Tam Lin indicates that the supernatural forces which caused the transformations of Tam Lin have been vanquished by Margaret's grip and the naming of the magic's focus.

The other two groupings of final instructions present a bit more complication when one examines their corresponding folk traditions. Bathing in water and milk has a considerable background in folk and literary narrative; Ulrich's *Lanzelet*, the Albanian "Taubenliebe," and the Greek "Goldgerte" all contain segments where the "immersion in a liquid, generally water, but sometimes milk, is a process

⁴⁷ The use of the third person in Tam Lin's instruction may indicate his transitional state after the transformations; he will not then be the same man that he is while in the fairy realm.

requisite for passing from a non-human shape, produced by enchantment, back into the human" (Child, 338). The difficulty with the tradition does not occur in the belief's use, though; instead, the ballad's development and travel throughout the countryside has shifted the use of water from the final act of Tam Lin's rescue to Janet's protective fairy countermeasure: the sprinkling of holy water in a sheltering circle (Briggs 1976, 335). Because the two folk beliefs do not occur in the same variants,⁴⁸ and because of the inherent inaccuracy of oral transmission, the change in the function of water and milk may have been adjusted to accommodate a more popular tradition in certain areas, from which, in turn, two variants were collected.

In the TL variants, Tam Lin's instruction for Janet to cover him with her green mantle or kirtle at the completion of the transformations seems inconsequential other than the action being the final deed in his rescue.⁴⁹ But because of Tam Lin's request of specifically Janet's green mantle, suspicion must again arise concerning another confusion of folk tradition. The green mantle or skirt appears in TR:

Her skirt was of the grass-green silk,
Her mantle of the velvet fine...
(A, v.2)

⁴⁸ Immersion of Tam Lin occurs in B, v.34, and I, v.43, while Janet's protection through holy water occurs in D, v.25, and G, v.32.

⁴⁹ Corresponding verses are: A, v.35; B, v.37; F, v.16; I, v.51.

Her mantle was o velvet green,
And a' set round wi jewels fine...
(E, v.3)

The obvious difference between the two ballads, though, is to whom the green garments belong. The significance of green as a fairy color and its consequential adverse luck for mortals has already been discussed,⁵⁰ so the mantle's implied role as the final protective measure in TL falls into question, because what in one ballad is connected to the Fairy Queen's splendor is, in the other, a protection against the fairies. Wimberly suggests that the green mantle "has possibly a countermagical significance" (391), but he again fails to validate his claim with any analogous tales or beliefs. All that may be said of the confusion of this and the other incorrectly manipulated folk traditions in TL is that because of the shared error in multiple variants, the flaws must have appeared in a source ballad or poem which confused the fairy beliefs, and that the creators of TL inadvertently incorporated such errors in the ballad variants.

The rescue of Tam Lin, even with its confused traditions, represents the most complex treatment of fairy belief in any of the four ballads and lais. The complexity, however, does not lie in the creator's originality of presentation, for the traditions are presented in a rather straightforward manner; the misinterpretation aside, there

⁵⁰ See p.46

are no obscure words or vague allusions present to hide meaning from the modern reader. The ballad's presentation of the sheer amount of folk tradition, however confused, is where its complexity lies; nearly every action or speech by the characters alludes to some fairy belief, from Janet's disturbance of nature to initially call Tam Lin,⁵¹ to her use of the power of naming as the final action in her lover's rescue.⁵²

TL and SO's rescue, TR's restoration, and SL's rescue/reunion each present a different treatment of the folk traditions connected with a victim's return from the fairy realm, and in some cases, their salvation from mortal danger. Individually, they range from the simplicity of treatment in TR, where the release receives no more emphasis than one short verse, through SL's fairy splendor with few folk allusions and SO's plot-based traditions, finally to TL's focus on the rescue with its questionable lore. What they accomplish together, though, is a survey of the myths surrounding fairy weaknesses and vulnerabilities, thus adding another chapter to the handbook of how a mortal should deal with the supernatural creatures.

⁵¹ See p.39-40

⁵² See p.55

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The fairy abductions and rescues of the four works comprise a wide variety of viewpoints and treatments of the supernatural in their minstrelsy. From their technical complexity to the intricate weaving together of numerous fairy beliefs, the artistry of SO, SL, TR, and TL illuminate and give depth to their bardic foundations, while simultaneously entertaining an audience through fantastic and didactic narratives.

Such complexity of design becomes evident in an examination of the abduction and rescue's function as technical apparatus; all of the works treat the fairies slightly differently, but the four poems utilize a similar core approach in dealing with the fairy realm through the narratives' literary devices.

The most obvious function of the abductions and rescues is in the plots; indeed, the poems' creation is centered around the mortals' contact, captivity, and/or retrieval from the supernatural. The four treatments of the meetings, though, do not all consider both abduction and rescue with equal distinction. While the Breton *lais* deal with the hero's tale from initial contact to final parting, the ballads highlight one event, either capture or rescue, while the other is relegated to a brief summary of no more than three verses. Such a brief treatment of one event in the

ballads appears to be dictated only by the length restrictions of the genre and the emphases that the ballads' creators seek to provide; as one finds in TR and TL, the amount of detail contained in the primary events is not diminished to accommodate a fuller retelling of an event of less importance to the short narrative.

These details themselves appear in the form of the fairies, who contribute color and splendor to otherwise undefined backgrounds. The settings of the mortals' contact all center around vague, wooded areas: SO's orchardside (ln.42), SL's fair forest (ln.222), TR's Huntle Bank (C, v.1), and TL's Carterhaugh (B, v.1), the last being the only work containing a definite landmark: "Tom Line was at the well" (B, v.4). The tales in which the rescue takes place in the mortal realm provide equally indistinct settings during the heroes' retrieval; Miles Cross in TL is merely mentioned, and the court of King Arthur in SL is not described in any amount of depth. Where detail appears in these undefined settings is in direct connection with the presence of the fairies. Thomas's fantastic journey, the black, brown and white of the fairy troop in TL, Heroudis's description of her dream and Fairyland's gruesome courtyard, and Triamour's opulent pavilion along with Launfal's rescuing parade of splendidly dressed maidens provide the only distinct color and display of any detail against the drab and indefinite mortal realm.

Along with their capacity as a colorful and varied background in the works, the fairy royalty also take on significant roles in the narratives as characters in their own right. Overall, the fairies tend to enhance the personalities of the mortals involved with them, only the ballad TR excepted. Triamour in SL aids the downtrodden knight in the reestablishment of his confidence, SO's Fairy King provides the opportunity for Orfeo to prove his devotion and minstrel's skill, and Janet's love and tenacity are demonstrated in her bravery throughout Tam Lin's horrific fairy transformations. Where TR is different from the others is in the brevity of character development in the ballad; the only attribute of Thomas that is apparent is his willingness to disregard the Fairy Queen's warning, for the remainder of the narrative is primarily concerned with the description of his journey to the fairy realm. Thus the function of the fairy royalty is not only concerned with the role of the fairies in the plot, but it also contributes substantially to the development of the mortal heroes' characters as well.

With the plot, setting, and character serving as a solid and creative narrative foundation, the works' folk beliefs are showcased through these literary devices. As was noted earlier in this chapter, the plots of the four works focus on the preparation, act, and/or consequences of each abduction and rescue, bringing the tales of mortal and

fairy contact to the two musical genres. But besides such an obvious function, setting and character also serve to recount various aspects of fairy tradition. Without the splendor of the Fairy Rade in SO, the fairy penchant for colorful brilliance in SL, and the fairy greens of the queen's garb in TR, the setting of each would lose some, if not all, of its distinction. Likewise, the motives for the abductions are directly connected with the temperament of the fairy royalty. The love which motivates Thomas's and Launfal's abductions reflects the benevolence with which the Fairy Queen treats the victims, while in contrast, the closing stanzas of TL, during which the queen curses him, indicate that Tam Lin's capture was solely to provide the devil with his tithe. Such interconnectedness of literary devices and folk traditions, technical features and legendary belief, truly displays the care and artistry with which the four ballads and lais were formed through the blurring the division between craft and fantasy.

In considering the sheer amount of fairy lore contained in the four works, one may argue that the inclusion of such a vast quantity of folk tradition in the ballads and lais is a technical feat in itself, for in no way do the poems appear to be simply a cataloging of fairy beliefs; instead, the popular lore is presented in neatly designed and entertaining tales, their purpose to amuse and delight the medieval audience.

All of the fairy traditions in the abductions of the four works may be arranged neatly into one of the five basic plot categories: who, what, when, where, and why. The initial two questions are the simplest to answer: it is the fairy royalty who are present to take a mortal from their own realm. And exactly who are the mortals being abducted? In SL the motive is clear; the Fairy Queen is in love with the unfortunate knight. The fairy mistress motif also appears in connection with TR, coupled with the queen's interest in Thomas's ability to sing and play the harp. As the fairy's disposition shifts to a more hostile character, so too does the reason that the chosen victim was captured. SO reports no definite reason for the abduction of Dame Heroudis, her May observance and sleep under the ympe tree being the only lures to the Fairy King. TL, on the other hand, presents a picture of a young man, possibly fatally falling from his horse, whom the Fairy Queen saves for malevolent purposes. Thus it would seem that when the queen is characterized as benevolent and kind as in TR and SL, the abduction is of one specific mortal, while in SO and TL, where the royalty is neither humane nor compassionate, the capture is not necessarily conducted for a certain individual, but for any mortal that chance may bring.

When and where may be answered together, for much of the fairy tradition concerning these questions is inherently linked due to the fairies' character. All of the abductions

take place outdoors, and each of the four works is similar in that the victim is asleep or resting under a certain type of tree when captured. In three of the poems, TR, TL, and SL, it may be argued that falling asleep under certain trees was enough to call the fairies, thus also answering exactly when the abductions take place. The only work that further connects popular fairy belief to when the victim is captured is SO, for Heroudis performs May rites on Beltaine, one of the fairy "Moving Days," placing her in the power of the supernatural. Nature, therefore, is the overwhelming image connecting not only when and where the victims are abducted, but also solidifying the fairy association with the natural world.

The final question, why, has been peripherally addressed throughout the examination of the initial four. Motive for the abductions ranges from the love of a fairy mistress in SL and TR, to Heroudis's fairy sacrilege of falling asleep under a sacred tree on May 1, finally to Tam Lin being captured as a fairy substitute in the tithe to the devil. With the seemingly repetitive answers to this final question, the fairy lore contained in the works comes full circle; the interconnectedness of the abductions' plot, motivation, and popular belief displays the artistry and care with which the crafters of the ballads and lais handled the genres.

In direct contrast to the abductions, each account of

the rescues in the works stands separately from the fairy lore contained in the others. The two works whose abductions were motivated by love deal with the rescues rather superficially, avoiding numerous in depth allusions to popular belief; Thomas's restoration to the mortal realm is relegated to no more than one verse at the conclusion of the ballad variants, and Triamour's defense of Launfal during his trial comprises less than fifty lines. SO and TL place more emphasis than the others on the beliefs surrounding a mortal's rescue from the fairy realm, incorporating various traditions into the basic plots of the narratives. The fairy love of music gives Orfeo the power to be granted a rash promise by the Fairy King and consequently regain Heroudis, and Janet's perseverance through the magical transformations of Tam Lin makes her triumphant in what seems to be a "trial by ordeal" in order to rescue her love. Through the differing accounts of the victims' retrievals, one discovers that in the four works, the intensity and quantity of popular fairy lore involved in the accounts directly reflects the structural importance of the rescue to the plot. Thus the brevity of TR and SL's accounts indicate their peripheral importance, while the rescue's significance in the narratives of SO and TL is apparent through their extensive recounting of fairy tradition.

Until relatively recently, the existence of the fairy

realm never fell into question for the people of the Celtic countries. The Sidhe, Seelie Court, and Tir ná Nog undoubtedly existed, and mortals who acquired second sight were indeed blessed by the supernatural forces which were closely entwined with nature and its secrets. With this belief stemming back to the first mythmakers of western Europe, it is no small wonder that the medieval fascination with the supernatural should embrace and manipulate such lore to conform to the popular genres of the day. Thus arises the double purpose of the abductions and rescues in SO, SL, TR, and TL; the ballads and lais represented both crafted entertainment, and practical information in how to be clever enough to prevail in meetings with the fairies.

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