

Lyrics carols ballads

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Brown1 = Carleton Brown ed., *English Lyrics of the XIIIth Century*, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press 1965 (1932).

Brown2 = Carleton Brown ed., *Religious Lyrics of the XIVth Century*, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press 1965 (1924).

Robbins = Rossell Hope Robbins ed., *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press 1964 (1952).

Duncan1 = Thomas G. Duncan ed., *Medieval English Lyrics 1200-1400*, Penguin 1995.

Duncan2 = Thomas G. Duncan ed., *Late Medieval English Lyrics and Carols 1400-1530*, Penguin 2000.

The text and music of about thirty songs are edited by E. J. Dobson and F. Ll. Harrison, *Medieval English Songs*, London, Faber 1979.

Greene = R. L. Greene ed., *The Early English Carols*, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press 1977 (1935).

Child = F. J. Child ed., *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, New York, Dover 1965 (1882-1898).

The tunes of Child's ballads are edited by B. H. Bronson, *The Traditional Tunes of the Child Ballads*, Princeton University Press 1959-1972.

I. Lyrics

'Medieval lyrics' are short poems dating from the 13th to the early 16th century, with or without music, religious and secular in content, expressing sentiment or meditation, devotional, didactic, comic, narrative or dramatic, or simply practical. Mostly anonymous, these poems are never personal: the 'I' that speaks is either a character or the representative of a common experience, which is given voice: they are meant for re-use by reader or hearer.

1. Miri it is while sumer i-last Duncan1 36, Brown1 7

Found in a manuscript fly-leaf dated circa 1225 (or 1230-1240), this is the oldest known song in English. It sings the depression of winter after the elation of summer: a syntony of moods and seasons. Whether a love complaint (a 13th century 'Yesterday'!) or a penitential song (the winter of life), the tune for solo voice conveys the sorrow in a descending melodic contour. The poem is set to three different musical phrases: the first (lines 1-2 and 3-4) has a falling opening from E to A (a fifth), then twice rises to D to descend to G (a fifth again); the second (lines 5 and 6) begins by rising from E to F in exclamation then descends to G; the third (line 7) rises from C to D and ends in G (all rhyme words are in G). Descent is still today the melodic contour of sadness.

Miri it is while sumer i-last	merry lasts
With foules song;	birds'
Oc now negheth windes blast	but now draws near
And weder strong.	rough weather
5 Ei, ei, what this night is long,	how long this night is
And Ich with wel michel wrong	I with very much (unjustly? for wrong doing?)
Sorwe and murne and fast.	sorrow mourn

2. Somer is y-comen in Duncan1 110, Brown1 6

The two lower voices, moving at intervals of fifths and thirds, and exchanging parts every two bars, sing the burden, *pes*, and beat the *ostinato* duple rhythm of the song: *sing cuc/cú nu* (each in turn has a rest instead of *nu*). Over their longer notes enter in succession four upper voices, which sing the same melody in unison, each delayed two bars from the previous one (a cross on the score), and each coming to sing the burden alone with the *pes* (the pauses are indicated with vertical lines on the score). And the *rota*, as it is called, could go on for ever. The effect is above all rhythmical: all living creatures - plants, animals and, implicitly, men - respond with exuberance to the coming of spring, synchronizing with and carried away by the rhythms of nature.

Text and score are found in a MS of c. 1240 from Reading Abbey; also the dialect is of a southern type. Below the English text of the cuckoo song the MS has, in a different colour, the Latin text of a song on the Resurrection, set to the same tune. Whether a secular tune turned religious or the other way round, cannot be ascertained. The monks of Reading recorded the profane along with the liturgical.

Sing, cuckou, nou! Sing, cuckou!
Sing, cuckou! Sing, cuckou, nou!

Somer is y-comen in, +	has come
loude sing, cuckou!	loudly
5 Groweth sed and bloweth med	seed blossoms meadow

and springth the wode nou. | comes into leaf wood
Sing cuckou! |

Ewe bleteth after lamb, bleats for
lowth after calve cou; | the cow lows for the calf
10 Bullok sterteth, bukke verteth leaps cavorts (?farts)
merye sing, cuckou! | merrily
Cuckou, cuckou,
Wel singest thou, cuckou,
Ne swik thou never nou! | do not stop ever

Hanc rotam cantare possunt quatuor socj. A paucioribus autem quam a tribus uel saltem duobus non debet dici preter eos qui dicunt pedem. Canitur autem sic. Tacentibus ceteris unus inchoat cum hijs qui tenent pedem. Et cum uenerit ad primam notam post crucem; inchoat alius + sic de ceteris. singuli uero repaudent ad pausaciones scriptas, non alibi; spacio unius longe note.

Sing cuccu nu, Sing cuccu!	Hoc repetit unus quociens opus est.
Pes	faciens pausacionem in fine
Sing cuccu, Sing cuccu nu!	Hoc dicit alius pausans in medio & non in fine. Set immediate repetens principium

3. Foules in the frith

Duncan1 16, Brown1 8

A two-part song of unrequited love. Love is for a human being what the wood and the sea are for birds and fishes, the element in which they live and are happy: and it is madness to be out of one's own element - out of syntony with the natural order. The two voices start and end an octave apart, in F, only meeting in the word *sorrow*, in D (rhymes also are an octave apart). It is a discant, a type of polyphonic song in which the voices proceed by contrary motion, one rising and the other falling: an appropriate way of rendering the lover's disjunction from self and from nature.

The modal *mon* in the third line is from the Old Norse *mun*, and denotes provenance from the Danelaw (East Anglia, East Midlands or the North), mid-thirteenth century.

Foules in the frith,	birds wood
The fishes in the flod,	sea
And I mon waxe wod.	must go mad
Much sorwe I walke with	sorrow
5 For beste of bon and blod.	the best creature of bone and blood

4. Lenten ys come with love to toune

Duncan1 20, Brown1 81

What the *Somer Rota* does rhythmically, this poem articulates verbally with the cumulative effect of details: the exuberance of nature in spring, the desire that irresistibly takes possession of man, the beauty of women, which makes them extremely proud, as if conscious that they are the crowning ornament of the season: and this makes them even more desirable, and the desire maddening.

Lenten ys come with love to toune,	spring to the world
With blosmes and with briddes rounne	blossoms birds' song
That al this blisse bringeth.	
Dayeseyes in this dales,	daisies these (= the)

- 5 Notes swete of nyghtegales,
 Ech fowel hire song singeth.
 The threstelcok him threteth oo,
 Away is here wynter wo
 When woderove springeth.
 10 This foules singen ferly fele,
 And wlyten on here wynne wele,
 That al the wode ringeth.
- The rose rayleth hire rode,
 The leves on the lighte wode
 15 Waxen al with wille.
 The mone mandeth hire ble,
 The lilie lufsom is to se,
 The fenyl and the fille.
 Wowen thise wilde drakes,
 20 Miles mirien here makes
 As strem ther striketh stille.
 Mody meneth, so don mo,
 Ichot Ich am one of tho
 For love that liketh ille.
- 25 The mone mandeth hire lyght,
 So doth the semly sonne bryght
 When briddes singen breme;
 Dewes donken the dounes,
 Deres with here derne rounes
 30 Domes for to deme;
 Wormes wowen under cloude,
 Wommen waxen wonder proude,
 So wel it wol hem seme;
 If me shal wonte wille of on,
 35 This wynne wele I wil forgon
 And wight in wode be fleme.
- each bird
 the song thrush chides continuously
 gone their winter woe
 woodruff
 these birds sing wonderfully many
 warble in their wealth of joys
 wood
 displays her red colour
 leaves in the bright wood
 grow vigour
 moon sends forth brightness
 lovely to see
 fennel chervil
 woo these wanton drakes
 animals gladden their mates
 as the stream flows gently
 the sorrowful man complains do more
 I know I am one of those
 because of love that causes distress
 moon sends forth
 lovely sun
 gloriously
 dewes moisten downs
 animals with their secret cries
 their wishes to express
 worms make love under ground
 extremely proud
 it will suit them
 if I must do without the favour of one
 wealth of joys I will forego
 and at once wood be a fugitive

5. Winter wakeneth al my care
 Brown2 9

Another song of winter sorrow, this one explicitly religious.

- Winter wakeneth al my care,
 Nou this leves waxeth bare;
 Ofte I sike and mourne sare
 4 When it cometh in my thought
 Of this worldes joie hou it geth al to noght.
- Nou it is and nou it nis,
 Also it ner nere ywys.
 8 That moni mon seith soth it is:
 "Al goth bote godes wille,
- sorrow
 these (=the) leaves grow
 I sigh sorely
 goes nothing
 it is not
 as if it never had been indeed
 what many men say true
 passes except god's

Alle we shule deye thagh us like ille.” though it ill pleases us

Al that grein me graveth grene grain one buries unripe
 12 Nou it faleweth al by-dene - withers forthwith
 Ihesu, help that it be sene visible
 And shild us from helle, protect
 For I not whider I shal ne hou longe her dwelle. I know not

6. Bird on briar

Duncan1 15, Robbins 147

The usual springtime association of birdsong and love is here couched in a generalization about nature, as coming from God's love and demanding love in return; and this leads to an invocation for requited love. The musical setting is for one voice.

Bryd one brere, brid, brid one brere, bird on briar
 Kynd is come of Love, love to crave; nature from love ask for
 Blithful bryd on me thu rewe, joyous bird/lady have pity
 4 Or greyth, lef, greith thou me my grave. prepare loved one

Ich am so blithe so bright brid on brere I am as happy as a bright bird
 Whan I see that hende in halle; when gracious one in the hall
 She is whit of lime, loveli, trewe, white of limb
 8 She is fair and flour of alle. flower (=the best)

Mighte Ich hire at wille haven, if I might have her
 Stedefast of love, loveli, trewe, from
 12 Joy and blisse were me newe. would be renewed for me

7. Lord, thou clepedest me

Duncan1 49, Brown2 5

The poem is preceded in the MS by a passage from Augustine's *Confessions* (viii,5) in which he speaks of a period when he lived as if sunk in sleep, unable to respond to the Lord's call to wake to the life of the spirit: *non erat quid responderem tibi...dicenti mihi 'Surge qui dormis...' nisi verba lenta & sompnolenta: 'modo, ecce modo, sine paululum.' Sed modo & modo non habebant modum & 'sine paululum' in longum ibat.* The double translation - into English and into verse - adds memorability to the idea of spiritual sloth.

Lord, thou clepedest me called
 An Ich nocht ne answerde thee and I answered you nothing
 But wordes slow and slepy: except slow sleepy
 "Thole yet, thole a litel." forbear
 5 But 'yet' and 'yet' was endelis, endless
 and 'thole a litel' a long wey is.

8. Three Sorrowful Tidings

Brown1 12a

Ech day me cumeth tydinges thre,	each
For wel swithe sore ben he:	very grievous are they
The on is that Ich shal henne,	one must go hence
That other that Ich not hwenne;	do not know when
5 The thridde is my meste care,	greatest grief
That Ich not hwider Ich shal fare.	do not know whither I must go

9. Whan mine eyen misteth

Duncan1 44, Brown1 71

Whan mine eyen misteth,	when eyes grow dim
And mine heren sisseth,	ears buzz
And my nose coldeth,	grows cold
And my tonge foldeth,	speech fails
5 And my rode slaketh,	complexion fades
And mine lippes blaketh,	grow pale
And my mouth grenneth,	gapes
And my spotel renneth,	spittle runs
And min her riseth,	hair stands on end
10 And min herte griseth,	heart quakes
And mine hondes bivieth,	hands tremble
And mine fet stivieth -	feet stiffen
Al to late, al to late,	too
Whan the bere is at the gate.	bier
15 Than I shal flit	must pass
From bedde to flore,	
From flore to here,	shroud
From here to bere,	bier
From bere to pit,	grave
20 And the pit fordit.	shut up
Than lith min hous uppe myn nese,	lies upon my nose
Of al this world ne give Ich a pese!	for all pea

10. Love is soft, love is swet

Duncan1 6, Brown1 53

Love is soft, love is swet,	
love is good sware;	a kind response
Love is muche tene,	sorrow
love is muchel care.	great suffering
Love is blissene mest,	greatest of blisses
love is bot yare.	quick remedy
4 Love is wandred and wo,	misery and woe
with for to fare.	to travel (=live) with
Love is hap who it haveth,	good luck whoever has it

	love is god hele;	good fortune
	Love is lecher and les,	lecherous false
	and lef for to tele;	glad to betray
	Love is doughty in the world,	honourable
	with for to dele.	to deal with
8	Love maketh in the land	
	many unlele.	unfaithful
	Love is staleworthe and strong	sturdy
	to striden on stede;	mount a horse
	Love is loveliche a thing	
	to wommane nede;	necessary for women
	Love is hardi and hot	fierce
	as glowinde glede;	glowing coal
12	Love maketh mani may	many a maiden
	with teres to wede.	tears to be distraught
	Love hath his styward	steward
	by sti and by strete;	along paths and highways
	Love maketh mani may	
	hire wonges to wete.	her cheeks to wet
	Love is hap, who it haveth,	
	on for to hete.	to be inflamed with
16	Love is wis, love is war,	wise prudent
	and wilful ansete.	strong-willed adversary
	Love is the softeste thing	
	in herte may slepe;	that may sleep
	Love is craft, love is good	strong
	with cares to kepe;	for engaging with sorrows
	Love is les, love is lef,	false desirable
	love is longinge;	
20	Love is fol, love is fast,	foolish steadfast
	love is frovringe;	comfort
	Love is sellich an thing,	a marvellous thing
	whoso shal soth singe.	whoever tell the truth
	Love is wele, love is wo,	happiness woe
	love is gladhede,	gladness
	Love is lif, love is deth,	
	love mai us fede.	feed
24	Were love also longdrei	as long-lasting
	as he is first kene,	eager
	Hit were the wordlokste thing	it would be the most precious
	in werlde were, Ich wene.	think
	Hit is y-said in an song,	
	soth is y-sene,	the truth is evident
	Love comseth with care	begins with sorrow
	and endeth with tene,	grief
28	Mid lady, mid wive,	with woman

mid maide, mid quene.

queen (?harlot)

11. Dore, go thou stille

Duncan1 12

Dore, go thou stille,

door quietly

Go thou stille, stille;

Yate, Ich have in the boure

gate I bower

4 Y-don al myn wille, wille.

accomplished desire

12. So longe Ich have, lady

Duncan1 14

So longe Ich have, lady,

Y-hoved at thi gate,

lingered

That mi fot is frore, faire lady,

foot frozen

4 For thy love faste to the stake.

gate-post

13. I syng of a mayden

Duncan1 79

MS Sloane 2593

I syng of a mayden

that is makeles,

peerless

King of alle kinges

4 to here sone she ches.

as her son she chose

He cam also styll

ther his moder was,

as silently

As dew in Aprylle

where

8 that falleth on the gras.

He cam also styll

to his moderes bowr,

bower

As dew in Aprille

12 that falleth on the flour.

flower

He cam also stille

ther his moder lay,

As dew in Aprille

16 that falleth on the spray.

branch

Moder and mayden

was never non but she -

Wel may swych a lady

such

20 Godes moder be!

14. Hit was upon a Shere Thorsday
Duncan1 112, Brown1 25, Child 23

A curious legend of why Judas sold Christ for 30 coins - but also a subtle prologue to the institution of the Eucharist: Christ becomes the food Judas was sent out to buy (*felix culpa!*). The sister, where we would expect a lover, implies that Judas is still tied to his carnal family, as is confirmed by his answer to her - which also reveals how little he has understood Christ's message. This is the oldest ballad-like narrative: MS Trinity College, Cambridge 323 (c. 1250).

4	Hit was upon a Shere Thorsday that oure Loverd aros, Ful milde were the wordes He spac to Judas:	Holy Thursday our Lord arose very mild spoke
8	“Judas thou most to Jurselem oure mete for to bigge; Thritti plates of selver thou bere upon thi rigge; Thou comest fer i the brode strete, fer i the brode strete; Some of thine kinnemen ther thou mayst y-mete.”	must go our food buy coins of silver you are to carry on your back you will go far in the highway kinsmen meet
12	He mette with his suster the swikele wommon. “Judas, thou were worthe me stonde thee with ston.	met sister deceitful you would be worthy to be stoned [<i>me = men</i>]
20	Judas, thou were worthe me stonde thee with ston, For the false prophete that thou bilevest upon.”	
24	“Be stille, leve suster, thin herte thee tobreke! Wiste min Loverd Crist, ful wel he wolde be wreke.”	be quiet dear sister may your heart break if my Lord Christ knew thoroughly avenged
28	“Judas, go thou on the rok, heighe upon the ston, Lay thin heved i my barm, slep thou thee anon.”	go on to the cliff high upon the crag head in lap go straight to sleep
32	Sone so Judas of slepe was awake, Thritte plates of selver from him weren y-take.	as soon as from sleep taken
	He drow hymselfe by the top that al it lavede ablode;	he tore his hair so that it all streamed with blood

36	The Jewes out of Jurselem awenden he were wode.	thought he was mad
	Forth hym com the riche Jew that highte Pilatus:	forward came was called
40	“Wilt thou selle thi Loverd that highte Jesus?”	is called
44	“I nil selle my Loverd for nones kinnes aughte, But it be for the thritti plates that he me bitaughte.”	will not no kind of possessions unless entrusted to me
48	“Wilt thou selle thy Loverd Crist for enes kinnes golde?” “Nay, but hit be for the plates that he haven wolde.”	any kind of no, unless it is wanted to have
52	In him com our Lord gon as his postles satte at mete - “How sitte ye, postles, and why nille ye ete?”	our Lord came walking in apostles sat at their meal will not eat
56	“How sitte ye, postles, and why nille ye ete? Ich am aboght and y-sold today for oure mete.”	bought and sold food
60	Up stod him Judas, “Lord am I that frec? I nas never on the stede ther me thee evel spec.”	stood up man was never in the place where men spoke evil of you
64	Up him stod Peter and spak with al is mighte: “Though Pilatus him come with ten hundred knighte, Though Pilatus him come with ten hundred knighte, Yet Ich wolde, Loverd, for thi love fighte.”	should come knights for the love of you
72	“Stille thou be, Peter, wel I thee y-cnowe; Thou wilt forsake me thryes er the cok him crowe.”	be quiet thrice before crows

15. Seynt Stevene was a clerk
Duncan1 126, Child 22

Another lyric in ballad-form: MS Sloane 2593, London, British Library (c. 1400-1450), a minstrel's songbook.

	Seynt Stevene was a clerk	attendant
	in Kyng Herowdes halle,	
	And served him of bred and cloth,	with bread and table-cloth
4	as every kyng befalle.	would befit
	Steven out of kichen cam	
	with bores hed on honde,	a boar's head in his hands
	He saw a sterre was fayr and bright	star which was
8	over Bedlem stonde.	
	He cast adoun the bores hed,	
	and went into the halle:	
	'I forsak thee, Kyng Herowdes	
12	and thy werkes alle.	
	'I forsak thee, Kyng Herowdes,	
	and thy werkes alle,	
	Ther is a chyld in Bedlem born	
16	is better that we alle.'	who is
	'What aileth thee, Stevene?	
	what is thee befalle?	happened to you
	Lakketh thee either mete or drynk?	do you lack food
20	in Kyng Herowdes halle?'	
	'Lakketh me neither mete ne drynk	I lack
	in Kyng Herowdes halle;	
	Ther is chyld in Bedlem born	
24	is beter than we alle.'	
	'What aileth thee, Stevene, ar thou wod,	are you mad
	or thou gynnest to brede?	are you beginning to rave
	Lakketh thee either gold or fee	payment
28	or any ryche wede?	fine clothing
	'Lakketh me neither gold ne fee,	
	ne non ryche wede;	
	Ther is a chyld in Bedlem born	
32	shal help us at our nede.'	in our necessity
	'That is also soth, Stevene,	as true
	also soth y-wis,	as true indeed
	As this capoun crowe shal	capon
36	that lyth here in myn dish.'	lies

That word was not so sone said, no sooner
 that word in that halle,
 The capoun crew *Christus natus est*
 40 among the lordes alle.

‘Riseth up, myn turmentoures,
 by two and al by on, one and all
 And ledeth Steven out of this town,
 44 and stoneth him with ston.’

Token they Stevene they took
 and stoned hym in the way;
 And therefore is his even eve
 48 on Cristes owen day.

16. Love woll I withoute eny variaunce
 Duncan2 37

This and the following poem take two opposing views of constancy in love: it makes for honour and favour (also social)...

Love woll I withoute eny variaunce	will inconstancy
Trewly to serve with al louelynesse;	faithfully lowliness
For yn hit is triste and gentilnesse,	loyalty courtesy
And that may man honour and avaunce.	bring a man honour and favour

17. Luf wil I with variance
 Duncan2 38

...but also for suffering.

Luf wil I with variance,	I will love inconstancy
Because y drede of repentance.	suffering
For whoso loveth withoutyn governance,	moderation
Offtyme it doth hym grevaunce.	often it causes him grief
5 Therfor with avisance	prudence
Love wil I with variance.	

18. Whotso men sayn
 Duncan2 39

This poem from the Findern MS (an anthology compiled for the Findern family in Derbyshire over a century, c. 1446 to 1550) is a woman’s acerbic answer to the pains of love alleged by men.

Whotso men sayn,	whatever men say
Love is no peyn	pain
To them, serteyn,	certainly
But varians;	inconstancy

- 5 For they constreyn compel
 Ther hertes to feyn their hearte falsely to cause
 Ther mowthes to pleyn utter
 Ther displeasauns. discontent
- Whych is in dede
- 10 But feyned drede - only feigned anguish
 So God me spede - so help me God
 And dowbilnys; duplicity
 Ther othes to bede their oaths to promise
 Ther lyves to lede to conduct their lives properly
- 15 And profer mede - offer reward
 Newfangellnys. pursuit of novelty
- For when they pray, entreat
 Ye shall have nay you will get nothing
 Whatso they sey - whatever
- 20 Beware ffor shame!
 For every daye
 They waite ther pray lie in wait for their prey
 Wherso they may, wheresoever
 And make butt game. only amuse themselves
- 25 Then semeth me it seems to me
 Ye may well se
 They be so fre
 In every plase, place
 Hitt were peté it would be a pity
- 30 Butt they shold be if they were not
 Begeled, pardé, beguiled, by God
 Withoutyn grase. without mercy

19. I am sorry for her sake
 Duncan2 40

The song of a forsaken but uncomplaining lover, who expects the good wine of a new love as against the tasteless ale of an old one.

- Care away, away!* away with care
Away murnynge, away! sorrow
 Y am forsake, forsaken
 Another ys take, taken
- 5 *No more murne yc may.*
- I am sorry for her sake,
 Yc may wel ete and drynke;
 Whanne yc sclepe yc may not wake, sleep cannot lie awake
 So much on here yc thenke. think
- 10 *Care away, etc.*

22. Spende, and God schal sende

Duncan2 149

Spende, and God schal sende;

Spare, and ermor care;

Non peni, non ware,

Non catel, non care -

5 Go! peni, go!

hoard evermore worry

no penny merchandise

no goods worries

23. Punctuation Poem

Robbins 111

Two poems in one, of well- and mal-contentedness. The full stop marks phrases and clauses that can be collocated with either what precedes or what follows; the first half-lines of ll. 2-7 also form an alternative rhyme scheme, a rhyme royal stanza *ababbcc* (as against *ababbcbc*). This makes the poem suitable for a two-part musical setting, each voice with its own melodic phrasing (the Fairfax MS. in the British Museum, Additional MS. 5465, dated c. 1500, has a version set to music by Richard Davy, but only the tenor part survives, the treble was in the missing leaves of the MS: cp. J. Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court*, Cambridge University Press 1979 (1961), p.356).

Comic application of this syntactic ambiguity is made in *Ralph Roister Doister* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Nowe the lawe is ledde by clere conscience .

ffful seld . Covetise hath dominacioun .

very seldom

In Every place . Right hath residence .

4 Neyther in towne ne feld . Similacion .

simulation

Ther is truly in every cas . Consolacioun .

The pore peple no tyme hase . but right .

have

Men may fynd day ne nyght . Adulacioun .

8 Nowe reigneth treuth in every mannys sight .

loyalty

24. Ich herde men upon mold

Duncan1 113

This poem, from MS Harley 2253, gives vent to the farmers' discontent - the taxes, the petty officials of the manor, the weather. The officials mentioned are: the 'hayward' (15), who was responsible for maintaining the fences which separated the common land from enclosed land; the 'bailiff' (16), who administered the lord's land and upheld his rights in law; the 'woodward' (17), who was in charge of forests and forest timber; and the 'beadle' (37), who worked under the authority of the bailiff, here acting as a tax-collector; and as a seal of green wax was affixed to the documents containing the names of those to be taxed, tax money was known as 'silver for the green wax' (38).

Ich herde men upon mold

earth

make mucche mon,

great lamentation

Hou he ben y-tened

how they are harassed

of here tilyinge:

in their farming

Gode yeres and corn

good years and corn-crops

bothe ben a-gon;

both have gone

Ne kepen here no sawe

they care to hear no tales

ne no song singe.

- 5 Now we mote werche, must labour
 nis ther non other won, there is no other option
 May ich no lengere
 live with my lesinge; losses
 Yet ther is a bitterer
 bit to the bon, cut to the bone
 For ever the ferthe peni every fourth penny
 mot to the kinge. must go
- Thus we carpen for the king, complain because of
 and caren ful colde, are vexed most bitterly
- 10 And wenen for to kevere, hope to recover
 and ever ben a-cast; are cast down
 Whoso hath any god, whoever goods
 hopeth he nought to holde, doesn't expect to keep it
 But ever the levest the dearest possessions
 we lesen a-last. lose in the end
- Lither is to lese wicked it is to lose
 ther as litel is, where there is little
 And haven many hynen we have many labourers
 that hopen therto; look for their share
- 15 The hayward heteth us harm threatens us harm
 to haven of his; to get his bit
 The bailif beckneth us bale hints at trouble for us
 and weneth wel do; expects to do well
 The wodeward wayteth us wo wood-keeper treats us badly
 that loken under rys; who forage (for fire-wood) under trees
 Ne may us rise no rest, for us there can be no rest
 riches ne ro. prosperity nor peace
 Thus me pileth the poure one (*me=men=one*) robs the poor man
 that is of lite pris: little account
- 20 Nede in swete and in swink inevitably in sweat toil
 swinde mot so. so must he perish
- Nede he mot swynde he needs must perish
 (though he hade wore) though he had vowed not to
 That nath nought an hood he who has not a hood
 his hed for to hide! cover
 Thus Wil walketh in lond, Will (=personification of arbitrary power)
 and lawe is forlore, abandoned
 And al is piked of the poure stolen from is all
 the prikeres pride. the rider's array
- 25 Thus men pileth the poure one robs
 and piketh ful clene, strips quite clean
 The riche men reimen plunder
 withouten any right;
 Her londes and her ledes their property
 lyen ful lene lie completely barren
 Thurgh bidding of bailifs, through the demands

- such harm hem han hight. have they threatened them
 Men of religioun,
 me halt hem ful hene, are held in utter contempt
 30 Baroun and bonde, by baron and peasant
 the clerk and the knight. cleric
 Thus Wil walketh in lond,
 and wandred is wene poverty is expected
 Falsshipe fatteth Falsehood (=personification of dishonesty) grows fat
 and marreth with might. brings ruin by his might
- Stont stille in the stede he stands unmoved in his place
 and halt him ful sturne behaves most sternly
 That maketh beggeres go he who
 with burdoun and bagges. staff
 35 Thus we ben hunted
 from hale to hurne; from corner to corner
 That er werede robes we who formerly wore robes
 nou weren ragges. wear
- Yet comen bideles beadles (=tax-collectors)
 with ful muche bost: great arrogance
 'Greythe me silver pay me
 to the grene wax; for the green wax
 Thou art writen i my writ, schedule
 that thou well wost!' - know
 40 Mo than ten sithes more times
 told I my tax. paid
 'Thenne mot Ich have must
 hennes arost, roast hens
 Fair on fish-day fast day
 laumprey and lax; lamprey salmon
 Forth to the chepinge!' - be off to the market
 gayneth no chost, nothing is to be gained by arguing
 Though I selle my bil hoe
 and my borst-ax. logging axe
- 45 Ich mot laye my wed must put down my deposit
 wel, yif I wille, in full, if I am willing
 Other selle my corn or
 on gras that is grene. still green on the blade
 Yet I shal be 'foul cherl', shall be called 'foul peasant'
 though they han the fille; have the full amount
 That Ich alle yer spare, what all the year save
 thenne I mot spene. must spend
- Nede I mot spene of necessity I must spend
 that I spared yore; what I previously saved
 50 Ayein this cachereles comen against the time these catch-polls
 thus I mot care; must worry
 Cometh the maister bidel, chief beadle
 brist as a bore, bristling like a boar

- Saith he wille my bigging
 bringe ful bare.
 Mede I mot minten,
 a mark other more,
 Though Ich at the set day
 selle my mare.
- 55 Thus the grene wax
 us greveth under gore -
 That me us hunteth
 as hound doth the hare.
- They us hunten as hound
 hare doth on hille;
 Sithe I tok to the lond
 such tene me was taught.
 N'aven ner bideles
 boded her fille,
- 60 For they may scape
 and we aren ever caught.
- Thus I kippe and cacche
 cares ful colde,
 Sithe I counte and cot
 hade to kepe.
 To seche silver to the king
 I my seed solde,
 Forthy my lond leye lith,
 and lerneth to slepe.
- 65 Sithe they may faire fee
 fette y my folde.
 When I think o my wele,
 wel nigh I wepe.
 Thus bredden manye
 beggeres bolde,
 And oure reye is roted
 and ruls er we repe.
- Ruls is our reye
 and roted in the stree,
 70 For wickede wederes
 by brokes and by brynke.
 Thus wakeneth in the world
 wandred and wee -
 As god is swinden anon
 as so for to swinke!
- home
 strip completely bare
 bribe must think of
 mark or more
- grieves us deeply
 one
- since I took to tilling the land
 trouble I was
 never have beables
 declared their full takings
 escape
- get and come by
 sorrows most bitter
 since accounts smallholding
- find
- therefore lies fallow
- after that livestock
 took away from my fold
 on my (former) prosperity
 I almost weep
 are bred
- rye rotten
 useless before reap
- useless rye
 rotten on the stalk
 because of severe storms
 by streams and by banks
- distress and woe
 it is as well to perish forthwith
 as so to toil

25. The Land of Cokaygne

This comic fantasy of a land of plenty and play, without toil or trouble, is a monks', or a fools', paradise of gluttony, lechery and sloth. Text from *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, ed. by J. A. W. Bennett and G. V. Smithers, Oxford, At the Clarendon Press 1966, pp. 138-44.

	Fur in the see bi west Spaygne	far sea
	Is a lond ihote Cokaygne.	called
	Ther nis lond under hevenriche	there is not heaven
	Of wel, of godnis, hit iliche.	wealth like it
5	Thogh Paradis be miri and bright,	
	Cokaygn is of fairir sight.	
	What is ther in Paradis	
	Bot grasse and flure and grene ris?	except flower branch
	Thogh ther be joie and gret dute,	pleasure
10	Ther nis met bote fruit;	there is no food except fruit
	Ther nis halle, bure, no bench,	bower
	Bot watir manis thurst to quench.	man's thirst
	Beth ther no men bot two -	
	Hely and Enok also;	
15	Elinglich mai hi go	miserably they live
	Whar ther wonith men no mo.	where dwell
	In Cokaigne is met and drink	food
	Withute care, how, and swink;	anxiety toil
	The met is trie, the drink is clere,	excellent
20	To none, russin, and sopper.	light meal
	I sigge forsoth, boute were,	say without doubt
	Ther nis lond on erthe is pere;	his (=its) peer
	Under heven nis lond, iwise,	indeed
	Of so mochil joi and blisse.	
25	Ther is mani swete sighte;	
	Al is dai, nis ther no nighte.	
	Ther nis baret nother strif,	conflict neither
	Nis ther no deth, ac ever lif;	but
	Ther nis lac of met no cloth,	lack of food and clothing
30	Ther nis man no womman wroth,	angry
	Ther nis serpent, wolf, no fox,	
	Hors no capil, kowe no ox,	nag cow
	Ther nis schepe no swine no gote,	goat
	No non horwg, la, God it wote,	filth, indeed knows
35	Nother harace nother stode -	horse-breeding establishment stud
	The lond is ful of other gode.	
	Nis ther flei, fle, no lowse;	fly, flea
	In cloth, in toune, bed, no house;	clothing town
	Ther nis dunnir, slete, no hawle,	thunder hail
40	No non vile worme no snawile,	snail
	No non storme, rein, no winde.	
	Ther nis man no womman blinde,	
	Ok al is game, joi, and gle.	but pleasure entertainment
	Wel is him that ther mai be!	
45	Ther beth rivers gret and fine	are

	Of oile, melk, honi, and wine;	
	Watir servith ther to nothing	
	Bot to sight and to waiissing.	except to look at washing
	Ther is mani maner frute -	kinds of fruit
50	Al is solas and dedute.	enjoyment
	Ther is a wel fair abbei	abbey
	Of white monkes and of grei.	
	Ther beth bowris and halles:	bowers
	Al of pasteiis beth the walles,	pasties
55	Of fleis, of fisse, and rich met.	flesh fish
	The likfullist that man mai et.	most delightful eat
	Fluren cakes beth the schingles alle	flour shingles
	Of cherch, cloister, boure, and halle.	
	The pinnes beth fat podinges -	pegs puddings
60	Rich met to princes and kinges.	
	Man mai therof et inogh,	
	Al with right and nocht with wogh.	wrong
	Al is commune to yung and old,	
	To stoute and sterne, mek and bold.	proud and fierce , meek
65	Ther is a cloister, fair and light,	full of light
	Brod and lang, of sembli sight;	beautiful
	The pilers of that cloister alle	pillars
	Beth iturned of cristale,	shaped
	With har bas and capitale	their base capital
70	Of grene jasje and rede corale.	jasper
	In the praer is a tre	meadow
	Swithe likful for to se:	very pleasing
	The rote is gingeuir and galingale,	root ginger galingale
	The siouns bet al sedwale,	shoots zedoary (=aromatic plant)
75	Trie maces beth the flure,	excellent mace (=nutmeg)
	The rind canel of swet odor,	
	The frute gilofre of gode smakke.	clove flavour
	Of cucubes ther nis no lakke.	cubebs (=spicy berries)
	Ther beth rosis of rede ble	colour
80	And lilie likful forto se;	
	Thai faloweth never dai no night.	wither
	This aght be a swet sight!	must
	Ther beth .iiij. willis in the abbei	springs
	Of triacle, and halwei,	healing ointment and water
85	Of baum, and ek piement,	balsam also spiced wine
	Ever ernend to right rent.	running profit
	Of thai stremis al the molde	from those rivers earth
	Stonis preciuse, and golde.	
	Ther is saphir and uniune,	large pearl
90	Carbuncle and astiune,	astrion
	Smaragde, lugre, and prassiune,	ligure prasine
	Beril, onix, topasiune,	topaz
	Ametist and crisolite,	
	Calcedun and epetite.	chalcedony
95	Ther beth briddes mani and fale:	birds very many
	Throstil, thruisse, and nightingale,	song-thrush thrush

Chalandre, and wodwale,	calander woodwall (=oriole)
And other briddes without tale,	countless
That stinteth never bi har might	stop their
100 Miri to sing dai and night.	
Yite I do you mo to witte:	yet let you know more
The gees irosted on the spitte	roasted
Fleeth to that abbai, God hit wot,	fly knows
And gredith: 'Gees, al hote, al hot!'	cry out
105 Hi bringeth garlek, gret plente,	they
The best idight that man mai se.	dressed
The leverokes, that beth cuth,	larks renowned
Lightith adun to manis mouth	alight down to man's mouth
Idight in stu ful swithe wel,	dressed in stew very well
110 Pudrid with gilofre and canel.	seasoned clove
Nis no spech of no drink,	nothing is said about
Ak take inogh withute swink.	but toil
Whan the monkes gooth to masse,	
Al the fenestres that beth of glasse	
115 Turneth into cristal bright	
To give monkes more light.	
Whan the masses beth iseiid	
And the bokes up ileiid,	
The cristal turnith into glasse	
120 In state that hit rather wasse.	it was before
The yung monkes each dai	each
Aftir met goth to plai:	
Nis ther hauk no fule so swifte	hawk fowl
Bettir fleing bi the lifte	air
125 Than the monkes, heigh of mode,	high-spirited
With har slevis and har hode.	their sleeves hood
Whan the abbot seeth ham flee,	them
That he holt for moch glee;	considers pleasure
Ak natheles, al theramang,	in the midst of it
130 He biddith ham light to evesang.	them alight
The monkes lightith noght adun,	alight not down
Ak furre fleeth in o randun.	but farther with a rush
Whan the abbot him iseeth	for himself sees
That is monkes fram him fleeth,	his
135 He taketh maidin of the route	girl company
And turnith up hir white toute,	buttocks
And betith the taburs with is hond	tabors
To make is monkes light to lond.	
Whan the monkes that iseeth,	see
140 To the maid dun hi fleeth	down they
And goth the wench al abute,	
And thakketh al hir white toute,	pat
And sith aftir her swinke	then their toil
Wendith meklich hom to drink,	go meekly
145 And goth to har collacione	their light evening meal
A wel fair processione.	
Another abbei is therbi -	

- Forsoth, a gret fair nunnerie,
Up a river of swet milke,
150 Whar is gret plente of silk. where
Whan the someris dai is hote, summer's
The yung nunnes takith a bote boat
And doth ham forth in that river betake themselves
Bothe with oris and with stere. oars steer
155 Whan hi beth fur fram the abbei, they far
Hi makith ham nakid forto plei,
And lepith dune into the brimme water
And doth ham sleilich forto swimme. proceed skilfully
The yung monkes that hi seeth: they see that
160 Hi doth ham up and forth hi fleeth,
And commith to the nunnes anon,
And euch monke him taketh on, each one
And snellich berith forth har prei
To the mochil grei abbei,
165 And techith the nunnes an oreisun
With jambleve up and dun. raised leg (=dance step)
The monke that wol be stalun gode will stallion
And kan set aright is hode, hood
He schal hab withoute danger have difficulty
170 xij. wives euch yere,
Al throgh right and noght throgh grace,
Forto do himself solace,
And thilk monke that slepith best, that
And doth his likam al to rest, makes body
175 Of him is hoppe, God hit wote, hope knows
To be sone fadir abbot.
Whose wol com that land to,
Ful grete penance he mot do: must
Seve yere in swineis dritte seven swine's dung
180 He mote wade, wol ye iwitte, must understand
Al anon up to the chinne -
So he schal the lond winne.
- Lordinges gode and hend, courteous
Mot ye never of world wend may from go
185 Fort ye stond to yure cheance until risk your luck
And fulfille that penance,
That ye mote that lond ise you may see
And nevermore turne age, back
Prey we God so mote hit be! may
190 Amen, pur seint charite.

26. The Man in the Moon.

Duncan1 114, Brown1 89

The 'man in the moon' - the image seen in the full moon - is thought of as a man with a bundle over his shoulder, walking: in folk-belief he was banished to the moon for stealing thorns which he still carries on his

fork. In this comic monologue from MS Harley 2253 the (perhaps drunken) speaker, wonders at the figure and makes it come alive in a scene of everyday rural life. The 'man in the moon' is imagined as having been off to cut briars in order to mend hedges (which involved first planting cuttings in the gaps and then protecting them with branches of thorns: 13-16). He has been caught by the hayward (23-24), the official protecting the lord's property, and a pledge has been exacted from him as a promise of future payment. The speaker advises him on what course to take to redeem the pledge.

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|---|
| Man in the moone stond and strit, | stands still | strides |
| On his bot-forke his burthen he bereth; | forked stick | bundle |
| Hit is mucche wonder that he n'adoun slit, | it | great does not fall down |
| 4 For doute leste he falle, he shoddreth and shereth. | fear | trembles and swerves |
| When the frost freseth, mucche chele he bit; | freezes | chill endures |
| The thornes beth kene his hattren to-tereth. | sharp | which tear his clothes |
| Nis no wight in the world that wot when he sit, | person | knows sits down |
| 8 Ne, bote hit be the hegge, what wedes he wereth. | nor, unless it be the hedge, | garments wears |
|
 | | |
| Whider troweth this man ha the way take? | think | he is going |
| He hath set his o fot his other to-foren; | one | in front |
| For non highte that he hath ne seeth me him ner shake, | whatever haste | one never sees him stir |
| 12 He is the sloweste man that ever was y-boren. | born | |
| Wher he were o the feld pichinge stake | wherever | in planting cuttings |
| For hope of his thornes to ditten his doren, | hoping with | stop up gaps |
| He mot mid his twi-bil other trous make, | must | two-edged axe another bundle |
| 16 Other al his dayes werk ther were y-loren. | or else | would be lost |
|
 | | |
| This ilke man upon heigh when er he were, | same | up there whatever his origin |
| Wher he were i the moone boren and y-fed, | born and nurtured | |
| He leneth on his forke as a grey frere. | as | grey friar (=Franciscan) |
| 20 This crokede kaynard sore he is adred, | hunched idler | afraid |
| Hit is mony day go that he was here. | many a day | gone since |
| Ichot of his ernde he nath nought y-sped, | I reckon | that in his errand he has not succeeded |
| He hath hewe somwher a burthen of brere; | hewn | bundle briars |
| 24 Therefore sum hayward hath taken his wed. | for this | hedge-keeper his pledge |
|
 | | |
| 'If thy wed ys y-take, bring hom the trous, | taken | bundle |
| Sete forth thyn other fot, strid over sty. | set | along the way |
| We shule praye the hayward hom to our hous | shall | invite |
| 28 And maken him at eise for the maystry; | ease | as much as possible |
| Drinke to him deerly of ful good bous, | heartily | very good booze |
| And oure dame douse shal sitten him by. | sweet | wife |
| When that he is drunke as a dreynt mous, | drowned | mouse |
| 32 Thenne we schule borwe the wed atte baily!' | redeem | the pledge from the bailiff |
|
 | | |
| This man hereth me nought though Ich to him crye; | hears | me not shout |
| Ichot the cherl is def, the del him to-drawe! | I reckon | the devil take him |
| Though Ich yeiye upon heighe, nil he nought hye, | shout | at the top of my voice, he will not hurry |
| 36 The lustless ladde can nought o lawe. | lazy | fellow cannot get down |
| Hippe forth, Hubert, hosede pye! | hop up | stockinged magpie |
| Ichot th'art amarscled into the mawe. | I reckon | bewitched (by the moon) thoroughly |
| Though me tene with him that my teeth mye, | I am | angry so that my teeth grind |
| 40 The cherl nil nought adoun er the day dawe. | will not | dawns |

27. World's Bliss have Good Day

Duncan1 88, Brown1 58

A two-part motet, the first in English (c. 1260). Developed in 13th century France, the motet consisted in adding one or more upper voices to a phrase of plainsong (Gregorian chant), called *tenor*, in a counterpoint of different texts and different melodies (polytextual polyphony). In this case the *tenor* is the tune *Benedicamus Domino* of a major office of the Church. The upper voice, or *motetus*, starts an octave above the F of the *tenor*, and, after moving at intervals of fifths and thirds at the beginning of each bar, ends in unison (each stanza has its own music). The image of the suffering Christ is typical of the 'affective piety' of the 13th century: it turns the individual away from the joy of the world and brings him in unison with the voice of the Church.

	Worldes blisse, have god day!	good day to you (=farewell)
	Nou from myn herte wend away;	go
	Him for to loven min hert his went	has turned
4	That thurgh his side spere rent	through whose side the spear tore
	His herte blod shadde he for me,	shed
	Nayled to the harde tre;	stretched
8	That sweete bodi was y-tent,	stretched
	8 Prened with nayles three.	pierced
	Ha Jesu! thin holi heved	head
	With sharpe thornes was by-weved,	wrapped round
	Thi faire neb was al bi-spet,	face spat upon
12	With spot and blod meynd al by-wet.	spittle mingled drenched
	Fro the croune to the to	from crown toe
	Thi body was ful of pine and wo	pain and wo
	And wan and red.	pale
16	Ha Jesu! thi smarte ded	painful death
	Be my sheld and mine red	shield help
	From develes lore.	promptings
	Ha, swete Jesu, thin ore!	mercy
20	For thine pines sore,	
	Tech min herte right love thee	
	Whos herte blod was shad for me.	whose shed

[Tenor: Benedicamus Domino]

28. If thou serve a lord of prys

Duncan1 66

MS Sloane 2593.

	<i>Bewar, sqwyer, yeman and page,</i>	squire servant
	<i>For servyse is non heritage.</i>	inheritance
	If thou serve a lord of prys	worth
	Be not to boystous in thin servys;	too zealous

- 5 Damne not thin sowle in non wys, way
For servyse is non heritage.
- Winteres wether and wommanes thought
And lordes love chaungeth oft;
This is the sothe if it be sought, truth
10 For servyse is non heritage.
- Now thou art gret, tomorwen shal I,
As lordes chaungen her baly; their bailiff
In thin welthe werk sikerly, for your own prosperity steadily
For servyse is non heritage.
- 15 Than serve we God in alle wyse,
He shal us quiten our servyse repay
And yeve us yiftes most of pryse, give gifts worth
Hevene to be our heritage.

29. Of rybaudz I ryme

Duncan1 115

This a master's point of view on domestic servants - his exasperation breaking out in grotesque invective.
From MS Harley 2253.

- Of rybaudz I ryme menials
and rede o my rolle, tell in my roll
Of gadelinges, gromes, lackeys, servants
of Colyn and of Colle,
Harlotes, hors-knaves, attendants, stableboys
by pate and by polle, head by head (=one by one)
4 To devel Ich hem to-livre I consign them
and take to rolle! give as payment
- The gadelinges were gadered lackeys gathered
of Gonnylde gnoste; from Gunnild's spark (=a cannon)
Palfreyoures and pages grooms
and boyes with boste, arrogant boys
Alle were y-haught hatched
of an horse thost; from a horse turd
8 The devel hem afrete, devour them
raw other aroste! or roasted
- The shapere that hem shoop, creator them made
to shame he hem shadde them singled out
To flees and to flye, fleas flies
to tyke and to tadde; mongrels toads
So saith romauntz, as books say
whoso right radde: whoever reads aright
12 Flee com of flour, flea came from flour
and lous com of ladde. louse came from lad

- The harlotes ben horelinges
and haunten the plawe;
The gadelinges ben glotonous
and drinken er hit dawes;
Sathanas here syre
saide on his sawe:
16 Gobelyn made his garner
of gromene mawe.
- attendants are fornicators
practise copulation
lackeys gluttons
until it dawns
their sire
in his saying
Goblin (=a devil) granary
of a groom's belly
- The knave crammeth his crop
er the cok crape;
He momeleth and moccheth
and marreth his mawe;
When he is al for-laped
and lad over lawe,
20 A dozeyne of dogges
ne mighte hyre drawe.
- crams his crop
before crows
mumbles and munches
ruins stomach
completely sozzled
filled beyond measure
a dozen dogs
could not draw payment out of him
- The rybaud ariseth
er the day rewe,
He scrapeth on his scabbes
and draweth hem to dewe;
Sene is on his browe
and on his eye-brewe,
24 That he louseth a losynger
and shooeth a shrewe.
- rascal get up
before dawns
picks at his scabs
makes them ooze
it is evident from his forehead
eyebrow
would free a flatterer
shoe a shrew (?)
- Nou ben capel-claweres
with shame to-shride;
They busken hem with botouns
as hit were a bride,
With lowe-lacede shoon
of an heifer-hide;
28 They piken of here provendre
al here pride.
- stable-boys
shamefully clothed
adorn themselves with buttons
like girls
low-laced shoes
of heifer's hide
filch from their fodder
all their finery
- Whoso rekeneth with knaves
here costage -
The lithernesse of the ladde,
the pride of the page! -
Though he yeve hem cattes dryt
to here companage,
32 Yet hem sholde arewen
of the arrerage!
- whoever settles with knaves
their wages
the evil of the varlet
gave them cat's shit
for their relish
they would complain
about the balance due
- While God was on erthe
and wandrede wide,
What was the resoun
why He nolde ride?
For He nolde no grom
- would not
groom

- to go by His side,
 36 Ne grucchyng of no gadeling nor the grumbling of any lackey
 to chaule ne to chide. jabbering or quarrelling
- Spedeth you to spewen, you are as quick to vomit
 as me doth to spelle; as I am to speak
 The fend you afrete the fiend devour you
 with flesh and with felle! flesh and skin
 Herkneht hiderward, horsmen, listen here, stablemen
 a tidying Ich you telle,
 40 That ye shulen hangen you will hang
 and herberewen in helle. and lodge in hell

30. Where ben they before us were
 Duncan1 47, Brown1 48

Ou sont les neiges d'antan?, 'where are the snows of yesteryear?', is the refrain of Villon's 'Ballade des dames du temps jadis'. The *ubi sunt* topos is wide-spread in the Middle Ages; its first appearance in English is in the Anglo-Saxon elegy of the *Wanderer*. The following poem moralises on the theme.

Ubi sunt qui ante nos fuerunt

- Where ben they bifore us were, where are they who
 Houndes ladde and hawkes bere, who led carried
 And hadde feld and wode? possessed
 4 The riche ladies in here bour their bower
 That wered gold in here tressour wore their head-dress
 With here brighte rode? complexion
- They ete and dronke and made hem glad, themselves
 8 Here lif was al with gamen y-lad, in pleasure spent
 Men kneled hem biforen; knelt
 They beren hem wel swithe hye bore themselves very proudly
 And in a twinkling of on eye
 Here soules were forloren. lost
- Where is that laughing and that song,
 That trailing and that proude gong, trailing robes gait
 The hawkes and the houndes;
 16 All that joye is went away,
 That wele is comen to weilaway, joy woe
 To many harde stoundes. times
- Here paradis they nomen here, took
 20 And now they lye in helle y-fere,
 The fire hit brenneth ever; together
 Long is 'ay!' and long is 'o!', it burns
 Long is 'wy!' and long is 'wo!' -
 24 Thennes ne come they never. thence

- Dreye here, man, then if thou wilt
A litel pine that man thee bit,
Withdraw thine eses ofte;
- 28 Though thy pine be unrede,
And thou thinke on thy mede
It shall thee thinken softe.
- If that fend, that foule thing,
32 Thurgh wikke roun, thurgh fals egging,
Nether thee hath y-cast,
Up and be god champioun,
Stond, ne fal namore adoun
- 36 For a litel blast.
- Thou take the rode to thy staf,
And think on Him that theron yaf
His lyf that was so lef.
- 40 He it yaf for thee, thou yelde hit Him,
Agains His fo that staf thou nim
And wreke Him of that theef.
- Of right bileve thou nim that sheld,
44 The wiles thou art in that feld
Thin hand to strengthen fonde;
And keep thy fo with staves ord,
And do that traitour seye that word,
- 48 Biget that mery londe.
- Therin is day withouten night,
Withouten ende, strength and might,
And wreche of everich fo,
- 52 With god himselven eche lif
And pes and rest withouten strif,
Wele withouten wo.
- Maiden, moder, hevене quene,
56 Thou might, and canst, and owest to ben
Our sheld again the fende;
Help us sinne for to fleen,
That we mote Thy son y-seen
- 60 In joye withouten ende.
- 31. Stond wel, moder, under rode**
Duncan1 91, Brown1 49
- “Stond wel, moder, under rode,
Bihold thi child wyth glade mode,
Blythe moder might thou be.”
- 4 “Sone, how may I blithe stonden?
I se thin feet, I se thin honden,
- endure
suffering that is required of you
forgo comforts
pain should be severe
and=if reward
seem mild
- fiend [devil]
evil counsel deceitful incitement
down
- cross as
gave
dear
gave repay Him for it
against take
avenge on thief
- belief take that shield
while
try
at staff's point
make (word of surrender)
win happy
- vengeance on every
eternal
- joy
- heaven's
ought to be
to flee sin
may see
- cross
gladsome heart
happy
- hands

Nayled to the harde tre.”

8 “Moder, do wey thi wepinge;
I thole this deth for mannes thinge -
For owen gilte thole I non.”
“Sone, I fele the dethe-stounde,
The swerd is at min herte-grunde,
12 That me by-highte Symeon.”

put away
suffer man’s sake
for my own guilt
pangs of death
bottom of my heart
promised

“Moder, rew upon thy beren!
Thow washe away tho blodi teren
It don me werse than mi det.”
16 “Sone, how might I teres wernen?
I se tho blodi flodes ernen
Out of thin herte to min fet.”

have pity child
wash those tears
worse death
restrain
those streams of blood run

“Moder, now I may thee seye,
20 Better is that Ich one deye
Than al mankin to helle go.”
“Sone, I se thi bodi swongen,
Thi brest, thin hond, thi fot thurgh-stongen
24 No selly nis though me be wo.”

say
I alone die
mankind should go
beaten
pierced through
it is no wonder if

“Moder, if I dar thee telle,
Yif I ne dye thou gost to helle;
I thole this deth for thine sake.”
28 “Sone, thou beest me so minde,
Ne wit me nought; it is mi kinde
That I for thee this sorwe make.”

if I do not die
suffer
you are so thoughtful
blame me not nature

“Moder, merci! let me deyen,
32 For Adam owt of helle beyen,
And al mankin that is forloren.”
“Sone, what shal me to rede?
Thi pine pineth me to dede,
36 Let me deyen thee biforen.”

in order to buy (=redeem)
mankind lost
what shall be to me as advice
thy torment torments death
die

“Moder, now tarst thou might leren
What pine thole that children beren
What sorwe have that child forgon.”
40 “Sone, I wot, I can thee telle,
Bute it be the pine of helle
More sorwe ne wot I non.”

for the first time learn
what pain they suffer who bear
they have who lose a child
know
unless
greater sorrow know

“Moder, rew of moder kare!
44 Now thou wost of moder fare,
Though thou be clene mayden-man.”
“Sone, help at alle nede,
Alle tho that to me grede,
48 Maiden, wif and fool womman.”

have pity on a mother’s sorrow
know about a mother’s condition
pure virgin
in every necessity
those that cry to me
foolish

	“Moder, I may no lenger dwelle, The time is come I fare to helle, The thridde day I rise upon.”	stay go
52	“Sone, I wille with thee founden, I deye y-wis, of thine wounden, So rewful deth was nevere non.”	hasten die indeed wounds pitiable death
56	When He ros tho fel thi sorwe, Thy blisse sprong the thridde morwe, Wel blithe moder wer thou tho. Moder, for that ilke blisse, Bisech oure God oure sinnes lisse,	your sorrow then vanished morrow happy then same bliss remit
60	Thou be oure sheld ayayn oure fo.	shield against
	Blissed be thou quen of hevene, Bring us out of helle leve Thurgh thi dere sunes might.	hell’s flames
64	Moder, for that heighe blode That He shadde upon the rode, Led us into hevene light. Amen.	noble blood shed heaven’s light

32. Edi be thou, hevene quene
Duncan1 76, Brown1 60

This two-part song in praise of the Virgin is a *gymel*: the two voices proceed in parallel thirds, the lower with only three notes (A G F), the upper in three distinct tune-units - the first is made of rising and falling fifths (F-C-F: lines 1,3,7), the second is a stepwise ascent-descent (lines 2,4,8), the third a stepwise descent (lines 5,6). The mood is one of confident abandon, and the address is that of the courtly lover.

	Edi be thou, hevene quene, Folkes frovre and engles blis, Moder unwemmed and maiden clene,	blessed heaven’s queen comfort angels’ immaculate
4	Swich in world non other nis. On thee hit is wel eth-sene Of alle women thou havest the pris; Mi swete Levedi, her mi bene,	ne is [is not] it readily seen you are supreme lady hear prayer
8	And rew of me yif thi wille is.	have pity on if
	Thou asteye so the day-rewe That deleth from the derke night, Of thee sprang a leme newe	arose like the dawn that separates dark from light
12	That al this world haveth y-light. Nis non maide of thine hewe So fair, so shene, so rudy, so bright; Swete Lady, of me thou rewe	has lit complexion beautiful ruddy have pity on
16	And have merci of thin knight.	(<i>knight</i> = love servant)
	Spronge blosme of one rote, The Holy Gost thee reste upon; That was for monkinnes bote	blossom sprung from single root rested mankind’s salvation

- 20 And here soule t'alesen for on. their souls to free in exchange for one
 Ladi milde, softe and swote, sweet
 Ich crie thee merci, Ich am thy mon, man (=servant)
 Bothe to honde and to fote, both hand and foot
 24 On alle wise that Ich con. in every way that I know
- Thou art erthe to gode sede, earth for good seed
 On thee lighte th'evene-dew, alighted heavenly dew
 Of thee sprang the edi blede, that blessed fruit
 28 The Holy Gost hire on thee sew. her [= it, fruit] sowed
 Thou bring us out of care, of drede
 That Eve bitterliche us brew, brewed
 Thou shalt us into hevene lede - lead
 32 Wel swete is the ilke dew. same dew
- Moder ful of thewes hende, courteous virtues
 Maide dreye and wel y-taught, patient
 Ich am in thine love-bende, love bonds
 36 And to thee is al mi draught. inclination
 Thou me shild, ye, from the fende,
 As thou art fre and wilt and maught,
 Help me to mi lives ende, shield me, indeed, fiend (=devil)
 as generous and willing and can
 40 And make me with thin sone y-saught. reconciled

33. Gabriel, from hevene king
 Duncan1 77, Brown1 44

- Gabriel, fram hevene king heaven's
 Sent to the maide swete,
 Broughte hire blisful tiding her tidings
 4 And faire he gan hire grete: courteously did greet her
 "Hail be thou, ful of grace aright,
 For Goddes sone, this hevene light,
 For mannes love indeed
 heaven's
 8 Wil man bicomme,
 And take
 Flesh of thee, maiden bright,
 Mankin fre for to make mankind free
 12 Of sinne and devles might."
- Mildeliche him gan answeere gently
 The milde maiden thanne: then
 "Whiche wise sholde Ich bere in what way bear
 16 Child withouten manne?"
 Th'angel saide: "Ne dred thee nought,
 Thurgh th'Holi Gost shal ben y-wrought,
 This ilke thing done
 same
 20 Wherof tiding
 Ich bringe;
 Al mankin worth y-bought mankind shall be redeemed

- 24 Thurgh thy swete childinge,
And out of pine y-brought.” child-bearing
torment
- Whan the maiden understod
And th’angles wordes herde,
Mildeliche with milde mod mood
28 To th’angel she answerde:
“Our lordes thew-maiden i-wis handmaid indeed
Ich am, that her-aboven is. who is above
Anentes me as regards
32 Fulforthed be fulfilled
Thy sawe; word
That Ich, sithe His wil is, since is is
Maiden, withouten lawe, against the law of nature
36 Of moder have the blis.” should have
- Th’angel wente away mid than, at that
Al out of hire sighte;
Hire wombe arise gan
40 Thurgh th’Holi Gostes mighte.
In hire was Crist biloke anon, enclosed forthwith
Soth God, soth man in flesh and bon, true bone
And of hir fles flesh
Y-bore wes was born
44 At time. in due time
Wherthrough us cam god won; whereby good hope
He bought us out of pine,
48 And let Him for us slon. allowed himself to be slain for us
- Maiden-moder makeles, virgin-mother peerless
Of milce ful y-bounde, with mercy fully endowed
Bid for us Him that thee ches pray for us to him that chose thee
52 At whom thou grace funde, from whom found
That He foryive us sinne and wrake, may forgive evil-doing
And clene of evry gilt us make, guilt
And hevne blis,
56 Whan our time is
To sterve, die
Us yive, for thine sake, give
Him so her for to serve here
60 That He us to him take. may take us to himself

34. Now goth sonne under wode
Duncan1 84, Brown1 1

- Now goth sonne under wode, sun wood
Me reweth, Marie, thi faire rode. I grieve for face
Now goth sonne under tre, tree
4 Me reweth, Marie, thi sone and thee. son

35. Whan Ich se on rode

Duncan1 87, Brown1 35

Brown1 has several versions of this lyric on the Crucifixion (34-37), all ending with the appeal to love: the repetition 10-12 “suggests that the lyric had originally a musical setting.”

	Whan Ich se on rode	see on the cross
	Jhesu mi lemman,	beloved
	And beside Him stonde	
4	Marie and Johan,	
	And His rig y-swongen,	back scourged
	And His side y-stongen,	pierced
	For the love of man,	
8	Wel ow Ich to wepen	ought I to weep
	And sinnes forleten,	forsake
	Yif Ich of love can,	if I am capable of love
	Yif Ich of love can,	
12	Yif Ich of love can.	

36. Love me broughte

Duncan1 70

	Love me broughte,	
	And love me wroughte,	created
	Man, to be thi fere;	companion
4	Love me fedde,	
	And love me ledde,	
	And love me letted here.	kept me here
	Love me slow,	slew
8	And love me drow,	drew
	And love me leyde on bere;	laid on a bier
	Love is my pes,	peace
	For love I ches	chose
12	Man to byen dere.	buy (=redeem) dearly

	Ne dred thee nought,	
	I have thee sought	
	Bothen day and night;	
16	To haven thee,	
	Wel is me,	
	I have thee wonne in fight.	won

37. Now I se blosme sprynge

Duncan1 69

	Now I se blosme sprynge,	blossom flourish
	Ich herde a foules song,	heard a bird's song

- A swete love-longinge
 Myn herte thurghout sprong, throughout has sprung up
 5 That is of love newe, about a new love
 That is so swete and trewe,
 Hit gladeth al my song; it gladdens
 Ich wot al mid y-wisse I know with certainty
 My lyf and eke my blysse also
 10 Is al theron y-long. dependent
- Of Jhesu Crist I synge,
 That is so fayr and fre, noble
 Swetest of alle thynges, beings
 His owne Ich owe wel be; his own I ought indeed to be
 15 Ful fer He me soughte, very far
 Mid hard He me boughte
 With woundes two and thre;
 Wel sore He was y-swonge, painfully scourged
 For me mid spere y-stonge, with a spere pierced
 20 Y-nailed to the tree.
- Whan Ich myselve stond stand
 And mid herte y-see, with see
 Y-thirled fet and honde
 With grete nailes three -
 25 Blody was His heved, head
 Of Him nas nought by-leved was no part left
 That of pyne was fre -
 Wel oughte myn herte,
 Al for His love smerte, smart
 30 Syk and sory be. sigh
- A way! that I ne can alas
 To Him turne al my thought,
 And make Him my lemman lover
 That thus me hath y-bought redeemed
 35 With pine and sorwe longe,
 With woundes depe and stronge -
 Of love ne can I nought! I am incapable
 His blod that fel to grounde
 Out of His swete wounde,
 40 Of pine us hath y-brought. out of torment
- Jhesu, lemman softe,
 Thou yif me strengthe and might, give
 Longinge sore and ofte yearning
 To serve thee aright;
 45 And leve me pine drye, let me suffer pain
 For thee, swete Marie,
 That art so fayr and bryght.
 Mayde and moder milde,
 For love of thine childe,

50 Ernde us hevene light. obtain for us heaven's light

Jhesu, lemman swete,
I sende thee this songe,
And wel ofte I thee grete
And bidde thee among;

greet
pray to you constantly
grant me soon to forsake

55 Yif me sone lete,
And mine sinnes bete,
That I have do thee wrong.

atone for
whereby have done

At mine lyves ende,
Whan I shal henne wende,

life's end
hence go

60 Jhesu, me underfonge! Amen.

receive

38. A minstrel's greeting

Robbins 1

Bon jour, bon jour a vous!
I am cum unto this hous,
With par la pompe, I say

come

Is ther any good man here
That will make me any chere?
And if ther were, I wold cum nere

kindly welcome
near

4 To wit what ye wold say.
A, will ye be wild?
By Mary myld

know
merry

.....

8 I trow ye will syng gay.
Bon jour...

Be gladly, masters eveychon!
I am cum myself alone
To appose you on by on.

everyone

12 Let se who dare say nay -
Sir, what say ye?
Syng on, let us see.

examine one

Now will it be

16 Thys or another day?
Bon jour...

Loo, this is he that will do the dede!
He tempereth his mouth, therfore take hede.
Syng softe, I say, leste your nose blede,

tunes heed

20 For hurt yourself ye may!
But by God that me bought,
Your brest is so tought,

redeemed
taut (=congested)
coughed

Tyll ye have well cought
Ye may not therwith away.

24
Bon jour...

Sir, what say ye with your face so lene? lean
 Ye syng nother good tenoure, treble, ne mene. neither mean (=middle voice)
 Utter not your voice without your brest be clene, unless clean
 28 Hartely I you pray!
 I hold you excused,
 Ye shall be refused,
 For ye have not be used
 32 To no good sport nor play.
 Bon jour...

Sir, what say ye with your fat face?
 Me thynkith ye shuld bere a very good bass
 To a pot of good ale or ipocras, sweet wine
 36 Truly as I you say!
 Hold up your hede, head
 Ye loke lyke lede; lead
 Ye wast myche bred waste much
 40 Evermore from day to day.
 Bon jour...

Now will ye see wher he stondith behynde?
 Iwis, brother, ye be unkynd. indeed
 Stond forth, and wast with me som wynd, waste...wind (=speak)
 44 For ye have ben called a synger ay. always
 Nay, be not ashamed;
 Ye shall not be blamed,
 For ye have ben famed
 48 The worst in this contrey!
 Bon jour...

39. A minstrel's begging song
 Robbins 5

MS Sloane 2593.

Omnes gentes plaudite,
 I saw myny bryddis setyn on a tre; many birds sitting
 He tokyn her fleyght and flowyn away, they took their flight and flew
 4 With ego dixi, have good day. with that
 Many whyte federes hagt the pye - has
 I may noon mor syngyn, my lyppis arn so drye! no more are
 Manye whyte federis hagt the swan -
 8 The mor that I drynke, the lesse good I can!
 Lay stykkys on the fer, wyl mot it brenne, sticks on the fire well may it burn
 Geve us onys drynkyn er we gon henne! give once before hence

8 withouten any bone.

She sente me the brere briar
withouten any rinde,

12 She bad me love my lemman
withoute longing.

How sholde any cherye
be withoute stone?

16 And how sholde any dove
ben withoute bone?

How sholde any brere
ben withoute rinde?

20 How sholde I love my lemman
withoute longing?

When the cherye was a flour,
than hadde it non stone;

24 When the dove was an ey, egg
than hadde it non bone.

When the brere was onbred unbred (=not yet sprouted)
than hadde it non rinde;

28 When the mayde hath that she loveth what
she is without longing.

II. Carols

'Carols' are burden-and-stanza songs (the burden repeated after each stanza) that developed from the 13th century progressively becoming religious in content; in modern times they are Christmas songs (originally the carol was a dance and a dance song).

1. As I me rode this endre dai Duncan1 21, Brown1 62

This 13th century lyric is a *chanson d'aventure* (a chance encounter) in carol-form. A carol is a poem with a 'burden', that is, a line or group of lines which precedes the first stanza and which is then repeated after each stanza (the 'refrain' is instead a line or lines repeated within the stanza). Carols will become progressively religious in content, and associated with Christmas.

<i>Nou springeth the spray,</i>	sprouts the twig
<i>Al for love Ich am so syk</i>	I am so sick
<i>That slepen I ne may.</i>	

As I me rode this endre dai	went riding the other day
5 On mi playinge,	for my pleasure
Seigh I where a litel may	saw maiden
Bigan to singe:	
'The clot him clinge!	clod (=earth) to him cling
Wo is him in love-longinge	woeful is anyone who
10 Shal liven ay.'	must live for ever
<i>Nou springeth, etc.</i>	

Sone Ich herde that merye note,	as soon as
Thider I drogh;	thither I drew
I found hire in an herbe swot,	her arbour sweet
15 Under a bogh,	bough
With joie ynogh.	enough
Sone I asked: 'Thou merye mai,	
Why singestou ay?'	do you sing always
<i>Nou springeth, etc.</i>	

20 Than answerde that maiden swote	sweet
Mid wordes fewe:	with
'Mi lemman me hath bihote	lover has made me a pledge
Of love trewe:	
He changeth anewe.	again
25 If I mai, it shal him rewe,	he will regret it
By this day.'	
<i>Nou springeth, etc.</i>	

2. Lullay, lullay, litel child
Duncan1 50

This is the first English lullaby - not a soothing one.

	Lullay, lullay, litel child	
	why wepestou so sore?	weapest thou bitterly
	Nedes mostou wepe	of necessity must you weep
4	it was i-yarkerd thee of yore	ordained long ago
	Ever to live in sorwe,	
	and sigh and mournen evermore,	
	As thine eldren did er this,	forbears before now
8	whil they alives wore.	alive were
	Lullay, lullay, litel child,	
	child, lullay, lullow,	
	Into uncouth world	unknown
12	y-commen so artou.	come are you
	Bestes and tho foules,	beasts and the birds
	the fishes in the flode,	sea
	And ech shaft alives,	creature alive
16	maked of bone and blode,	made
	Whan they commen to the world,	
	they don hemself some gode,	good
	Alle but the wrecche brol	wretched brat
20	that is of Adames blode.	
	Lullay, lullay, litel child,	
	to care artou bemette;	to sorrow are you destined
	Thou nost nought this worldes wilde	know not that power
24	before thee is y-sette.	is set against you
	Child, if it betideth	happens
	that thou shalt thrive and thee,	prosper
	Think thou were y-fostred	rememeber that
28	up thy moder knee;	upon mother's
	Ever have mind in thin hert	remember
	of tho thinges thre,	those
	Whan thou commest, what thou art,	whence
32	and what shall come of thee.	become
	Lullay, lullay, litel child,	
	child, lullay, lullay	
	With sorwe thou com into this world,	came
36	with sorwe shalt wend away.	go
	Ne tristou to this world,	do not trust in
	it is thy fulle foe;	declared enemy
	The rich he maketh pouer,	he=world poor
40	the pouer rich also;	likewise
	It turneth wo to wel,	misery to prosperity
	and eke wel to wo;	also
	Ne trist non man to this world	let no man trust in

- 44 while it turneth so.
Lullay, lullay, litel child,
thy fote is in the whele; foot wheel
Thou nost whider it wil turne,
48 to wo other to wele. misery or prosperity
- Child, thou art a pilgrim
in wikkednes y-born;
Thou wandrest in this false world,
52 thou loke thee befor! look ahead
Deth shal comen with a blast
out of a well dim horn, very sombre horn
Adames kin adoun to cast -
56 himself hath don befor. Adam himself he (Death) did
Lullay, lullay, litel child,
so wo thee worth Adam, Adam became your misfortune
In the lond of paradis,
60 through wikkednes of Satan.
- Child, thou n'art a pilgrim
but an uncouth gest; alien guest
Thy dawes ben y-told, days are numbered
64 thy journeyes ben y-cest; charted
Whider thou shalt wend, go
by north other by est, or
Deth thee shall betide befall
68 with bitter bale in brest. pain
Lullay, lullay, litel child,
this wo Adam thee wrought, wrought for you
Whan he of the appil ete
72 and Eve it him betought. gave

3. Als I lay upon a night
Greene 149, Brown2 56

This long lullaby carol comes from the commonplace-book compiled in 1372 by the franciscan friar John Grimestone. The burden is repeated after each stanza.

*Lullay, Lullay, la, lullay,
Mi dere moder, lullay.*

- 1 Als I lay upon a night, as
Alone in my longing,
Me thoughte I saw a wonder sight, it seemed to me wondrous
A maiden child rocking.
- 2 The maiden wolde withouten song
Hire child o slepe bringe; put her child to sleep
The child thoughte she did him wrong
And bad his moder singe.

- 3 “Sing now, moder,” seide that child,
 “What me shal befall
 Hereafter whan I cum to eld; come of age
 So don modres alle.
- 4 “Each a moder, trewly,
 That can hire cradel kepe
 Is wone to lulle lovely wont lovingly
 And singen hire child o slepe. to sleep
- 5 “Swete moder, fair and fre,
 Sithen that it is so, gracious
 I preye thee that thou lulle me since
 And sing sumwhat therto.” something as well
- 6 “Swete sone,” seyde she,
 “Wheroffe shulde I singe? of what
 Wist I nevere yet more of thee knew
 But Gabrieles gretinge. Gabriel’s greeting
- 7 “He grette me godly on his kne
 And seide, ‘Heil, Marie,
 Ful of grace, God is with thee;
 Beren thou shalt Messye.’ bear
- 8 “I wondrede michil in my thought,
 For man wold I right none, much
 ‘Marie,’ he seide, ‘drede thee nought; wished
 Let God of hevne alone. leave it to God
- 9 “ ‘The Holy Ghost shal don al this,’
 He seyde, withouten wone, do
 That I shulde beren mannis blis, delay
 Thee, my swete sone.
- 10 “He seide, ‘Thou shalt beren a king
 In Kinge Davidis see; kingdom
 In al Jacobs woniing house
 Ther king shuld he be.’ there
- 11 “He seyde that Elizabeth,
 That baraine was before, barren
 A child conceyved hath,
 ‘To me leve thou the more.’ believe
- 12 “I answerede blithely,
 For his word me payede, gladly
 ‘Lo, Godis servant her am I; pleased
 Be it as thou me seyde.’ here

- 13 “Ther, als he seide, I thee bare, bore
 On midwinter night,
 In maydenhed withouten care, pain
 By grace of God Almighty.
- 14 “The sheppardis that wakkeden in the wolde kept watch on the hill
 Herden a wonder mirthe heard
 Of angeles ther, as they tolde,
 In time of thy birthe.
- 15 “Swete sone, sikerly,
 No more can I say,
 And, If I coude, fayn wold I glad
 To don al at thy pay.” to your liking
- 16 “Moder,” seide that swete thing,
 “To singen I shal thee lere teach
 What me fallet to suffring happens
 And don whil I am here.
- 17 “Whanne the seven days ben don,
 Right as Abraham was,
 Cut shal I ben with a ston (circumcised)
 In a wol tendre place. very
- 18 “Whanne the twelve days ben do,
 By leding of a sterre star
 Three kinges me shul seke tho shall then
 With gold, insens, and mirre.
- 19 “The forty day, to fill the lawe,
 We shulen to temple y-ferre; go together
 Ther Simeon shal thee sey a sawe
 That changen shal thy chere. state of mind
- 20 “Whan I am twelve yer of elde, age
 Joseph and thou, murninge,
 Sholen me finden, moder milde,
 In the temple techinge.
- 21 “Til I be thretty at the leste
 I shal nevere from thee swerve,
 But ay, moder, ben at thin heste, always be
 Joseph and thee to serve.
- 22 “Whan the thretty yer ben spent,
 I mot beginne to fille must accomplish
 Wherfore I am hidre sent
 Thoru my Fader wille. Father’s
- 23 “John Baptist, of merit most,

Shal baptize me by name;
Than my Fader and the Holy Ghost
Sholen witnessen what I am.

- 24 “I shal ben tempted of Satan,
That fayn is to fonde, glad entice
The same wise that was Adam, way
But I shal betre withstonde. better
- 25 “Disciples I shal gadere gather
And senden hem for to preche, them
The lawes of my Fader
In al this werld to teche.
- 26 “I shal ben so simple,
And to men so conning, wise
That most partize of the puple part
Shal wiln maken me king.” desire
- 27 “Swete sone,” than seyde she,
“No sorwe shulde me dere injure
Might I yet that day see
A king that thou were.”
- 28 “Do wey, moder,” seid that swete,
“Therefore cam I nought,
But for to ben pore and bales bete relieve miseries
That man was inne brought.
- 29 “Therefore whan two and thretty yer ben do,
And a litel more,
Moder, thou shalt maken michil mon moan
And seen me deye sore. see die
- 30 “The sharpe swerd of Simeon
Perse shal thin herte; pierce
For my care of michil won abundance
Sore thee shal smerte.
- 31 “Shamfully for I shal deye,
Hangende on the rode; hanging on the cross
For mannis ransom shal I paye
Myn owen herte blode.”
- 32 “Alas, sone,” seyde that may,
“Sithen that it is so,
Whorto shal I biden that day why live to see
to beren thee to this wo?”
- 33 “Moder,” he seide, “taket lighte,
For liven I shal ageyne, easily

- And in thy kinde thoru my might
For elles I wroughte in veyne. nature
- 34 “To my Fader I shal wende go
In myn manhede to hevene; manhood
The Holy Ghost I shal thee sende
With his sondes sevene. gifts
- 35 “I shal thee taken, whan time is,
To me at the laste,
To ben with me, moder, in blis;
Al this than have I caste. arranged
- 36 “Al this werld demen I shal judge
At the doom risinge;
Swete moder, here is al
That I wile now singe.”
- 37 Serteynly this sighte I saw,
This song I herde singe,
Als I lay this Yulis Day,
Alone in my longinge.

4. He bare hym up, he bare hym down
Duncan2 79

This lullaby carol is first found in an early 16th century MS. The chivalric imagery of the Christ-knight elaborates the eucharistic theme (the Feast of Corpus Christi was established in 1264).

Lulley, lulley; lully, lulley;
The fawcon hath born my mak away falcon mate

- He bare hym up, he bare hym down;
He bare hym into an orchard brown.
5 *Lulley, lulley; etc.*

In that orchard ther was an hall,
That was hanged with purpill and pall. purple fabrics
Lulley, lulley; etc.

- And in that hall ther was a bede; bed
10 Hit was hanged with gold so rede. red
Lulley, lulley; etc.

And yn that bed ther lythe a knyght, lies
His wowndes bledyng day and nyght.
Lulley, lulley; etc.

- 15 By that bedes side ther kneleth a may, maiden
And she wepeth both nyght and day.

Lulley, lulley; etc.

And by that beddes side ther stondest a ston,
‘Corpus Christi’ wreten ther-on.

written

20 *Lulley, lulley; etc.*

5. Illa iuventus that is so nyse
Duncan2 88

This carol mingles Latin and English in a rhythmic *memento mori* or dance of death. It has both a burden and a refrain.

*Alas, my hart will brek in thre;
Terribilis mors conturbat me.*

dreadful death confounds me

Illa iuventus that is so nyse
Me deduxit into vayn devise;
5 Infirmus sum, I may not rise -
Terribilis mors conturbat me.
Alas, my hart etc.

that time of youth foolish
led me into idle pleasure
infirm I am

Dum iuvenis fui, lytill I dred,
Set semper in sinne I ete my bred;
10 Iam ductus sum into my bed -
Terribilis mors conturbat me.
Alas, my hart etc.

while I was young dreaded
but ever ate
now I am led to

Corpus migrat and my sowle,
Respicit demon in his rowle,
15 Desiderat ipse to have his tolle -
Terribilis mors conturbat me.
Alas, my hart etc.

my body and soul part
the devil looks in his list
he wishes to have his toll

Christus se ipsum, whan he shuld dye,
Patri suo his manhode did crye:
20 ‘Respice me, Pater, that is so hye,
Terribilis mors conturbat me.’
Alas, my hart etc.

himself was to die
to his father
look upon me

Queso iam the Trynité:
‘Duc me from this vanité
25 In celum, ther is joy with the’ -
Terribilis mors conturbat me.
Alas, my hart etc.

now I entreat
lead me
into heaven, where

6. Blowyng was mad for gret game

Duncan2 98

Through burden and refrain this carol reiterates a piece of prudential advice.

*I hold hym wyse and wel i-taught
Can bar an horn and blow it naught.*

who knows how to bear not

Blowyng was mad for gret game;
Of this blowyng cometh mekell game;
5 Therfor I hold it for no schame
To ber a horn and blow it nought.
I hold hym wyse etc.

made entertainment
much harm

bear not

Hornes ar mad both loud and shyll;
Whan tym ys, blow thou thi fyll,
10 And when ned is, hold the styll,
And ber a horne and blow it nought.
I hold hym wyse etc.

shrill

need keep quiet

Whatsoever be in thi thought,
Her and se, and sey ryght nought;
15 Than schall men sey thou art wel tought
To ber a horne and blow it nought.
I hold hym wyse etc.

hear and see, and say nothing
taught

Of al the ryches under the son
Than was ther never betur wonne
20 Than is a tawght man for to konne
To ber a horne and blow it nought.
I hold hym wyse etc.

sun
then better habit
who knows how

Whatsoever be in thi brest,
Stop thi mouth with thi fyst,
25 And lok thou thynk well of 'Had I wyst',
And ber a horne and blow it nought.
I hold hym wyse etc.

known

And when thou syttest at the ale,
And cryest lyk a nyghttyngale,
30 Bewar to whom thou tellest thi tale,
But ber a horne and blow it nought.
I hold hym wyse etc.

sing like

7. The Cherry-Tree Carol

Child 54A

This carol-ballad was published in 1833 (a slightly different version had appeared in 1823). It draws on the *Pseudo-Matthew Gospel*, ch. 20, where the fruit is a palm and Jesus is already born. A similar episode was

dramatized in the N-town cycle of biblical plays (15th century), as part of the comedy of Joseph's putative fatherhood.

- 1 Joseph was an old man,
and an old man was he,
When he wedded Mary,
in the land of Galilee.
- 2 Joseph and Mary walked
through an orchard good,
Where was cherries and berries,
so red as any blood.
- 3 Joseph and Mary walked
through an orchard green,
Where was cherries and berries,
as thick as might be seen.
- 4 O then bespoke Mary,
so meek and so mild:
"Pluck me one cherry, Joseph,
for I am with child.
- 5 O then bespoke Joseph,
with words most unkind:
"Let him pluck thee a cherry
that brought thee with child."
- 6 O then bespoke the babe,
within his mother's womb:
"Bow down then the tallest tree,
for my mother to have some."
- 7 Then bowed down the highest tree
unto his mother's hands;
The she cried, See, Joseph,
I have cherries at command.
- 8 O then bespake Joseph:
"I have done Mary wrong;
But cheer up, my dearest,
and be not cast down."
- 9 Then Mary plucked a cherry,
as red as the blood,
Then Mary went home
with her heavy load.
- 10 Then Mary took her babe,
and sat him on her knee,
Saying, My dear son, tell me

what this world will be.

- 11 “O I shall be as dead, mother,
as the stone in the wall;
O the stones in the streets, mother,
shall mourn for me all.
- 12 “Upon Ester-day, mother,
my uprising shall be;
O the sun and the moon, mother,
shall both rise with me.”

8. The Bitter Withy

Also this carol-ballad elaborates an episode from the *Pseudo-Matthew*, ch. 26, already developed in a *Childhood of Jesus* preserved in a 15th century manuscript. It was first collected in 1905; the text is from *The Ballad Book*, ed. by MacEdward Leach, New York, Barnes 1975 (1955), pp. 689-90.

- 1 As it fell out on a holy day
The drops of rain did fall, did fall,
Our Saviour asked leave of his mother Mary
If he might go play at ball.
- 2 “To play at ball my own dear son,
It’s time you was going or gone,
But be sure let me hear no complaint of you
At night when you do come home.
- 3 It was upling scorn and downling scorn, ?(uptowners and downtowners playing against each other)
Oh, there he met three jolly jerdins ?fellows
Oh, there he asked three jolly jerdins
If they would go play at ball.
- 4 “Oh, we are lords’ and ladies’ sons,
Born in bower or in hall,
And you are but some poor maid’s child
Born’d in an ox’s stall.”
- 5 “If you are lords’ and ladies’ sons,
Born’d in bower or in hall,
Then at the very last I’ll make it appear
That I am above you all.”
- 6 Our Saviour built a bridge with the beams of the sun,
And over he gone, he gone he.
And after followed the three jolly jerdins,
And drowned they were all three.
- 7 It was upling scorn and downling scorn
The mothers of them did whoop and call,

Crying out, "Mary mild, call back your child,
For ours are drowned all."

- 8 Mary mild, Mary mild, called home her child,
And laid our Saviour across her knee,
And with a whole handful of bitter withy
She gave him slashes three.
- 9 Then he says to his mother, "Oh! the withy, oh! the withy.
The bitter withy that causes me to smart, to smart,
Oh! the withy it shall be the very first tree
That perishes at the heart."

III. Ballads

'Ballads' are narrative songs that developed in the 16th century from the confluence of folksong and metrical tales; they began to receive critical attention in the 18th century.

1. The Three Ravens

Child 26

This ballad with refrain is often compared with the Corpus Christi carol, as a secularized, chivalric *Pietà*. It is first found in Thomas Ravenscroft's *Melismata. Musicall Phansies Fitting the Court, Cittie, and Countrey Humours* (London, 1611), with a four-part setting.

- 1 There were three ravens sat on a tree, that sat
Downe a downe, hay down, hay downe
 There were three ravens sat on a tree,
With a downe
 There were three ravens sat on a tree,
 They were as blacke as they might be.
With a downe derrie, derrie, derrie, downe, downe
- 2 The one of them said to his mate,
 'Where shall we our breakefast take?'
- 3 'Downe in yonder greene field,
 There lies a knight slain under his shield.
- 4 'His hounds they lie downe at his feete,
 So well they can their master keepe.
- 5 'His haukes they flie so eagerly,
 There's no fowle dare him come nie.' near
- 6 Downe there comes a fallow doe,
 As great with yong as she might goe.
- 7 She lift up his bloody hed,
 And kist his wounds that were so red.
- 8 She got him up upon her backe,
 And carried him to earthen lake. pit
- 9 She buried him before the prime, 6 a.m.
 She was dead herselfe ere even-song time. evening-
- 10 God send every gentleman,
 Such haukes, such hounds, and such a leman. lover

2. Captain Car, or, Edom o Gordon Child 178A

This ballad comes from a manuscript of about 1580, and is contemporaneous with the atrocity it narrates. In 1571 Adam Gordon ('Edom o Gordon') sent or went with Captain Car to raid the lands of his enemy, John Forbes ('Lord Hamilton' in the ballad). During the raid they came to a castle defended only by their enemy's wife. A gloomy burden accompanies the stanzas.

- 1 It befell at Martynmass,
When wether waxed colde,
Captaine Care said to his men,
We must go take a holde. lodging
- Syck, sike, and to-towe sike,* too-too
And sike and like to die;
The sikkest nighte that ever I abode, endured
God lord have mercy on me!
- 2 "Haille, master, and wether you will, whither
And wether ye like it best;"
"To the Castle of Crecrynbroghe,
And there we will take our reste."
- 3 "I knowe wher is a gay castle,
Is builded of lyme and stone;
Within their is a gay ladie,
Her lord is riden and gone."
- 4 The leadie she lend on her castle-walle, leaned
She loked upp and downe;
There was she ware of an host of men, aware
Come riding to the towne.
- 5 "Se yow, my meri men all,
And se yow what I se?
Yonder I see an host of men,
I muse who they be." wonder
- 6 She thought he had ben her wed lord,
As he comd riding home; came
Then was it traitur Captaine Care
The lord of Ester-towne.
- 7 They wer no soner at supper sett,
Then after said the grace,
Or Captaine Care and all his men before
Wer lighte aboute the place. alighted
- 8 "Give over thi howse, thou lady gay,
And I will make the a bande; thee compact
To-nighte thou shall ly within my armes,

To-morrow thou shall ere my lande.” inherit

- 9 Then bespacke the eldest sonne,
That was both whitt and redde:
O mother dere, geve over your howse,
Or elles we shallbe deade.
- 10 “I will not geve over my hous,” she saithe,
“Not for feare of my lyffe;
It shalbe talked throughout the land,
The slaughter of a wyffe.
- 11 “Fetch me my pestilett, pistollet
And charge me my gonne, gun
That I may shott at yonder bloody butcher,
The lord of Ester-towne.”
- 12 Styfly upon her wall she stode,
And lett the pellets flee;
But then she myst the bloody bucher, missed
And she slew other three.
- 13 “[I will] not geve over my hous.” she saithe,
“Neither for lord nor loune; low-born
Nor yet for traitour Captaine Care,
The lord of Ester-towne.
- 14 “I desire of Captine Care,
And all his bloddy band,
That he would save my eldest sonne,
The eare of all my lande.” heir
- 15 “Lap him in a shete,” he saith,
“And let him downe to me,
And I shall take him in my armes,
His waran shall I be.” security
- 16 The captayne sayd unto him selfe:
Wyth sped, before the rest,
He cut his tonge out of his head,
His hart out of his brest.
- 17 He lapt them in a handkerchief,
And knet it of knotes three,
And cast them over the castell-wall,
At that gay ladye.
- 18 “Fye upon the, Captayne Care,
And all thy bloddy band!
For thou hast slayne my eldest sonne,
The ayre of all my land.” heir

- 19 Then bespake the yongest sonne,
That sat on the nurses knee, nurse's
Sayth, Mother gay, geve over your house;
It smoldereth me.
- 20 "I wold geve my gold," she saith,
"And so I wolde my ffee, possessions
For a blaste of the westryn wind,
To dryve the smoke from thee.
- 21 "Fy upon the, John Hamleton,
That ever I paid the hyre!
For thou hast broken my castle-wall,
And kyndled the ffyre."
- 22 The lady gate to her close parler, went enclosed room
The fire fell aboute her head;
She toke up her children thre,
Seth, Babes, we are all dead. said
- 23 Then bespake the hye steward,
That is of hye degree;
Saith, Ladie gay, you are in close, in extremities
Wether ye fighte or flee.
- 24 Lord Hamleton dremd in his dream,
In Caruall where he laye,
His halle were all of fyre,
His ladie slayne or daye. dead
- 25 "Busk and bowne, my mery men all, make ready
Even and go ye with me; straight (*and* pleonastic)
For I dremd that my haal was on fyre,
My lady slayne or day."
- 26 He buskt him and bownd hym,
And like a worthi knyghte; (*and* pleonastic)
And when he saw his hall burning,
His harte was no dele lighte. not the least
- 27 He sett a trumpett till his mouth,
He blew as it plesd his grace;
Twenty score of Hamlentons
Was light about the place. alighted
- 28 "Had I knowne as much yesternighte
As I do to-daye,
Captaine Care and all his men
Should not have gone so quite. unpunished

- 29 “Fye upon the, Captaine Care,
And all thy bloody bande!
Thou haste slayne my lady gay,
More wurth then all thy lande.
- 30 “If thou had ought eny ill will,” he saith, owed
 “Thou shoulde have taken my liffe,
And have saved my children thre,
 All and my lovesome wyffe.” lovely

3. The Unquiet Grave Child 78A

The dead are disturbed by the immoderate grief of the living and have to remind them that hearts wither like flowers (Child’s version, collected 1868), or that hoping for reunion is like expecting fallen leaves to become green again (the version and tune published by Cecil Sharp in 1916, a variant of which is sung by Joan Baez). One famous medieval example of love beyond the grave is that of Helgi and Sigrun in the poetic *Edda*.

This is an instance of the ‘revenant ballad’: others are *The Wife of Usher’s Well* (Child 79), *The Demon Lover* (Child 243), *Clerk Saunders* (Child 69A and 77B).

- 1 “The wind doth blow today, my love,
 And a few small drops of rain;
I never had but one true-love,
 In cold grave she was lain.
- 2 “I’ll do as much for my true-love
 As any young man may;
I’ll sit and mourn all at her grave
 For a twelve month and a day.”
- 3 The twelve month and a day being up,
 The dead began to speak:
“Oh who sits weeping all on my grave,
 And will not let me sleep?”
- 4 “ ‘T is I, my love, sits on your grave,
 And will not let you sleep;
For I crave one kiss of your clay-cold lips,
 And that is all I seek.”
- 5 “You crave one kiss of my clay-cold lips;
 But my breath smells earthly strong;
If you have one kiss of my ckay-cold lips,
 Your time will not be long.”
- 6 “ ‘T is down in yonder garden green
 Love, where we used to walk,
The faintest flower that ever was seen
 Is withered to a stalk.”

- 7 “The stalk is withered dry, my love,
 So will our hearts decay;
 So make yourself content, my love,
 Till God’s call you away.”

Sharp’s version is taken from *The Penguin Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World*, ed. by A. B. Friedman, Penguin 1977 (1956), pp. 32-4.

- 1 Cold blows the wind to my true love,
 And gently drops the rain.
 I never had but one sweetheart,
 And in greenwood she lies slain
 And in greenwood she lies slain.
- 2 I’ll do as much for my sweetheart
 As any young man may;
 I’ll sit and mourn all on her grave,
 For a twelvemonth and a day.
- 3 When the twelvemonth and one day was passed,
 The ghost began to speak;
 “Why sittest here all on my grave
 And will not let me sleep?”
- 4 “There’s one thing that I want, sweetheart,
 There’s one thing that I crave;
 And that is a kiss from your lily-white lips -
 Then I’ll go from your grave.”
- 5 “My breast it is as cold as clay,
 My breath smells earthly strong;
 And if you kiss my cold clay lips,
 Your days they won’t be long.
- 6 “Go fetch me water from the desert,
 And blood from out of a stone;
 Go fetch me milk from a fair maid’s breast
 That a young man never had known.”
- 7 “O down in yonder grove, sweetheart,
 Where you and I would walk,
 The first flower that ever I saw
 Is wither’d to a stalk.
- 8 “The stalk is wither’d and dry, sweetheart,
 And the flower will never return;
 And since I lost my own sweetheart,
 What can I do but mourn?
- 9 “When shall we meet again, sweetheart,

When shall we meet again?"
 "When the oaken leaves that fall from the trees
 Are green and spring up again,
 Are green and spring up again."

4. The Wife of Usher's Well Child 79A

The mother's curses call back her dead sons, but only until the cock crows. First collected by Walter Scott in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* 1802.

- 1 There lived a wife at Usher's Well,
 And a wealthy wife was she;
 She had three stout and stalwart sons,
 And sent them oer the sea.
- 2 They hadna been a week from her, hadn't
 A week but barely ane, one
 Whan word came to the carline wife, old woman
 That her three sons were gane. gone(=dead)
- 3 They hadna been a week from her,
 A week but barely three,
 Whan word came to the carlin wife
 That her sons she'd never see.
- 4 "I wish the wind may never cease,
 Nor fashes in the flood, disturbances
 Till my three sons come hame to me, home
 In earthly flesh and blood."
- 5 It fell about the Martinmass,
 When nights are long and mirk, gloomy
 The carlin wife's three sons came hame,
 And their hats were o the birk. birch
- 6 It neither grew in syke nor ditch,
 Nor yet in ony sheugh; trench
 But at the gates o Paradise, any furrow
 That birk grew fair enough
- 7 "Blow up the fire my maidens,
 Bring water from the well;
 For a' my house shall feast this night,
 Since my three sons are well."
- 8 And she has made to them a bed,
 She's made it large and wide,
 And she's taen her mantle her about, taken
 Sat down at the bed-side.

- 9 Up then crew the red, red, cock,
And up and crew the gray;
The eldest to the youngest said,
'Tis time we were away.
- 10 The cock he hadna crawed but once,
And clappd his wings at a',
When the youngest to the eldest said,
Brother, we must awa. go away
- 11 The cock doth crawl, the day doth daw,
The channerin worm doth chide; dawn
Gin we be mist out o our place, grumbling
A sair pain we maun bide. if
sore must suffer
- 12 "Fare ye weel, my mother dear!
Fareweel to barn and byre! stable
And fare ye weel, the bonny lass
That kindles my mother's fire!"

5. The Demon Lover
Child 243B

The Rambler's Garland, 1785 (?).

- 1 "Well met, well met, my own true love,
Long time I have been seeking thee;
I'm lately come from the salt sea,
And all for the love of thee.
- 2 I might have had a king's daughter,
And fain she would have married me; gladly
But I've forsaken all her crowns of gold,
And all for the sake, love, of thee."
- 3 "If you might have had a king's daughter,
I think you much to blame;
I would not for five hundred pounds
That my husband should hear the same.
- 4 "For my husband is a carpenter,
And a young ship-carpenter is he,
And by him I have a little son,
Or else, love, I'd go along with thee.
- 5 "But I should leave my husband dear,
Likewise my little son also,
What have you got to maintain me withal,
If I along with you should go?"

- 6 “I have seven ships upon the seas,
And one of them brought me to land,
And seventeen mariners to wait on thee,
For to be, love, at your command.
- 7 “A pair of slippers thou shalt have
They shall be made of beaten gold,
Nay and be lin’d with velvet soft,
For to keep thy feet from cold.
- 8 “A gilded boat thou then shall have,
The oars shall gilded be also,
And mariners to row thee along,
For to keep thee from thy overthrow.”
- 9 They had been long upon the sea
Before that she began to weep:
“What, weep you for my gold?” he said,
“Or do you weep for my fee?
- 10 “Or do you weep for some other young man
That you love much better than me?”
“No, I do weep for my little son,
That should have come along with me.”
- 11 She had not been upon the seas
Passing days three or four
But the mariner and she were drowned,
And never were heard of more.
- 12 When tidings to old England came
She ship-carpenter’s wife was drowned,
He wrung his hands and tore his hair,
And grievously fell in a swoon.
- 13 “Oh, cursed be those mariners!
For they do lead a wicked life;
They ruined me, a ship-carpenter,
By deluding away my wife.

6. Clerk Saunders

Child 69A and 77B

Child 69A and 77B are found as one ballad in the manuscripts of the Scottish ballad collector David Herd (1732-1810): judging it a composite, Child split it. But David C. Fowler defends the integrity of the Herd version, “the greatest of the revenant ballads” (*A Literary History of the Popular Ballad*, Durham, N. C., Duke University Press 1968, pp. 193-7).

Child 69A

- 1 Clark Sanders and May Margret
Walkt ower yon graveld green, gravelly grass
And sad and heavy was the love,
I wat, it fell this twa between. I know (= indeed) between these two
- 2 “A bed, a bed,” Clark Sanders said,
“A bed, a bed for you and I;”
“Fye no, fye no,” the lady said,
“Until the day we married be.”
- 3 “For in it will come my seven brothers,
And a’ their torches burning bright; all
They’ll say, We hae but ae sister, have one
And here her lying wi a knight.” with
- 4 “Ye’l take the sourde fray my scabbord, sword from scabbard
And lowly, lowly lift the gin, quietly doorlatch
And you may say, your oth to save, oath
You never let Clark Sanders in.
- 5 Yele take a napken in your hand, you’ll neckerchief
And ye’l ty up baith your een, both eyes
An ye may say, your oth to save,
That ye saw na Sandy sen late yestreen. not since yesternight
- 6 Yele take me in your armes twa,
Yele carrey me into your bed,
And ye may say, your oth to save,
In your bower-floor I never tread.”
- 7 She has taen the sourde fray his scabbord, taken
And lowly, lowly lifted the gin,
She was to swear, her oth to save,
She never let Clerk Sanders in.
- 8 She has tain a napkin in her hand,
And she ty’d up baith her een;
She was to swear, her oth to save,
She saw na him sene late yestreen. yesternight
- 9 She has taen him in her armes twa,
And carried him ben into her bed; inside
She was to swear, her oth to save,
He never in her bower-floor tread.
- 10 In and came her seven brothers, (and pleonastic)
And all their torches burning bright;
Says thay, We hae but ae sister, have one
And see there her lying wi a knight.

- 11 Out and speaks the first of them,
 "A wat they hay been lovers dear;" I know (= indeed) have
 Out and speaks the next of them,
 "They hay been in love this many a year."
- 12 Out an speaks the third of them,
 "It wear great sin this twa to twain;" would be separate
 Out an speaks the fourth of them,
 "It wear a sin to kill a sleeping man."
- 13 Out an speaks the fifth of them,
 "A wat they'll near be twaind by me;" never
 Out an speaks the sixt of them,
 "We'l tak our leave and gae our way." go
- 14 Out an speaks the seventh of them,
 "Altho there wear no a man but me,

 I bear the brand, I'le gar him die." sword make
- 15 Out he has taen a bright long brand,
 And he has striped it throw the straw, whetted through the bed-straw
 And throw and throw Clarke Sanders' body
 A wat he has gard cold iron gae. made go
- 16 Sanders he started, an Margret she lapt, leapt
 Intill his arms whare she lay,
 And well and wellsom was the night,
 A wat it was between these twa.
- 17 And they lay still, and sleeped sound,
 Untill the day began to daw; dawn
 And kindly till him she did say
 "It's time, trew-love, ye wear awa." were away
- 18 They lay still, and sleeped sound,
 Untill the sun began to shine;
 She lookt between her and the wa, wall
 And dull and heavy was his een. eyes
- 19 She thought it had been a loathsome sweat,
 A wat it had fallen this twa between;
 But it was the blood of his fair body,
 A wat his life days wair no lang. were
- 20 "O Sanders, I'le do for your sake
 What other ladys would na thoule; endure
 When seven years is come an gone,
 There's near a shoe go on my sole. never
- 21 "O Sanders, I'le do for your sake

- What other ladies would think mare; more (= too much)
 When seven years is come an gone,
 Ther's near a comb go in my hair. never
- 22 "O Sanders, I'le do for your sake
 What other ladies would think lack; low (= beneath them)
 When seven years is come an gone,
 I'le wear nought but dowy black." nothing sad
- 23 The bells gaed clinking throw the towne,
 To carry the dead corps to the clay,
 An sighing says her May Margret,
 "A wat I bide a doulfou day." doleful
- 24 In an come her father dear,
 Stout steping on the floor;

- 25 "Hold your tounge, my doughter dear,
 Let all your mourning a bee; cease
 I'le carry the dead corps to the clay,
 An I'le come back and comfort thee."
- 26 "Comfort well your seven sons,
 For comforted will I never bee;
 For it was neither lord nor loune ?(lord error for *rogue*) man of low rank
 That was in bower last night wi mee."

Child 77B

- 1 Whan bells war rung, an mass was sung, were and
 A wat a' man to bed were gone, I know (= indeed) all men
 Clark Sanders came to Margret's window,
 With mony a sad sigh and groan. many
- 2 "Are ye sleeping, Margret," he says,
 "Or are ye waking, presentlie? at present
 Give me my faith and trouthe again, love token (perhaps a ring)
 A wat, trew-love, I gied to thee." I know (= indeed) gave
- 3 "Your faith and trouthe ye's never get, you'll
 Nor our trew love shall never twain, part
 Till ye come with me in my bower,
 And kiss me both cheek and chin."
- 4 "My mouth it is full cold, Margret. very
 It has the smell now of the ground;
 And if I kiss thy comely mouth,
 Thy life-days will not be long.

- 5 “Cocks are crowing a merry mid-larf,
I wat the wild fule boded day;
Gie me my faith and trouthe again,
And let me fare me on my way.” on merry middle-earth (= on earth)
I know (= indeed) fowl announced
travel
- 6 “Thy faith and truth thou shall na get,
Nor our trew love shall never twin,
Till ye tell me what comes of women
Awat that dy’s in strong traveling.” not
part
becomes
I know (= indeed) die in travail
- 7 “Their beds are made in the heavens high,
Down at the foot of our good Lord’s knee,
Well set about wi gilly-flowers,
A wat sweet company for to see I know (= indeed)
- 8 “O cocks are crowing a merry midd-larf,
A wat the wilde foule boded day;
The salms of Heaven will be sung,
And ere now I’le be misst away.” I know (= indeed)
- 9 Up she has tain a bright long wand,
And she has straked her truth thereon;
She has given [it] him out at the shot-window,
Wi many a sad sigh and heavy groan. taken stick
stretched
hinged window
with
- 10 “I thank you, Margret, I thank you, Margret,
And I thank you hartilie;
Gine ever the dead come for the quick,
Be sure, Margret, I’ll come again for thee.” if living
- 11 It’s hose an shoon an gound alane
She clame the wall and followed him,
Untill she came to a green forest,
On this she lost the sight of him. (with only her stockings, shoes and gown)
climbed
- 12 “Is their any room at your head, Sanders?
Is their any room at your feet?
Or any room at your twa sides?
Whare fain, fain woud I sleep.” there
where gladly would
- 13 “Their is na room at my head, Margret.
Their is na room at my feet;
There is room at my twa sides,
For ladys for to sleep.
- 14 “Cold meal is my covering owre,
But an my winding sheet;
My bed it is full low, I say,
Down among the hongerey worms I sleep. earth over
and also
hungry
- 15 “Cold meal is my covering owre,

But an my winding sheet;
 The dew it falls na sooner down
 Then ay it is full weet. than always very wet

7. The Great Silkie of Sule Skerry Child 113

This ballad was collected in 1852 from the recitation of a woman in the Shetlands. Sule Skerry is an island west of Orkney, and the protagonist is a being who can change shape, a 'silkie' (=seal) in the sea and a man on land.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | An eartly nourris sits and sings
And aye she sings, Ba, lily wean!
Little ken I my bairnis father,
Far less the land that he staps in. | earthly nurse
always hush, lovely child
know child's
resides |
| 2 | Then ane arose at her bed-fit,
An a grumly guest I'm sure was he:
"Here am I, thy bairnis father,
Although that I be not comelie. | one
and fierce-looking |
| 3 | "I am a man, upon the lan,
An I am a silkie in the sea;
And when I'm far and far frae lan,
My dwelling is in Sule Skerrie." | land
seal
from |
| 4 | "It was na weel," quo the maiden fair,
"It was na weel, indeed," quo she,
"That the Great Silkie from Sule Skerrie
Suld hae come and aught a bairn to me." | not well said
should have come and had a child by me |
| 5 | Now he has taen a purse of goud,
And he has pat it upo her knee,
Sayin, Gie to me my little young son,
An tak thee up thy nouris-fee. | taken gold
put upon
give |
| 6 | An it sall come to pass on a simmer's day,
When the sin shines het on evera stane,
That I will tak my little young son,
An teach him for to swim the faem. | shall summer
sun hot stone
foam |
| 7 | An thu sall marry a proud gunner,
An a proud gunner I'm sure he'll be,
An the very first schot that ere he schoots,
He'll schoot baith my young son and me. | ever
both |

8. Sir Patrick Spens
Child 58A, H

Child 58A is from Percy's *Reliques* 1765.

- 1 The king sits in Dumferling toune,
Drinking the blud-reid wine: blood-red
"O whar will I get guid sailor, where
To sail this schip of mine?"
- 2 Up and spak an eldern knight, old knight
Sat at the kings richt kne: king's right knee
"Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor
That sails upon the se." sea
- 3 The king has written a braid letter, broad (?= long)
And signd it wi his hand, with
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand.
- 4 The first line that Sir Patrick red, read
A loud lauch lauched he; laugh
The nexst line that Sir Patrick red,
The teir blinded his ee. tear eye
- 5 "O wha is this has don this deid, deed
This ill deid don to me,
To send me out this time o' the yeir,
To sail upon the se!
- 6 "Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morn:"
"O say na sae, my master deir,
For I feir a deadlie storme.
- 7 "Late late yestreen I saw the new moone, yesternight
Wi the auld moone in hir arme, old
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme."
- 8 O our Scots nobles wer richt laith very loath
To weet their cork-heiled schoone; wet cork-heeled shoes
Bot lang owre a' the play wer playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone. above
- 9 O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence before
Cum sailing to the land.
- 10 O lang, lang may the ladies stand,

Wi thair gold kems in their hair, combs
 Waiting for thair ain deir lords, own
 For they'll se thame na mair. them no more

- 11 Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour, half-way over
 It's fiftie fadom deip,
 And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
 Wi the Scots lords at his feit. feet

Child 58H is from Scott's *Minstrelsy* 1803.

- 1 The king sits in Dumfermline town,
 Drinking the blude-red wine: O
 "O whare will I get a skeely skipper, skilful
 To sail this new ship of mine?" O
- 2 O up and spake an eldern knight,
 Sat at the king's right knee:
 "Sir Patrick Spens is the best sailor
 That ever saild the sea."
- 3 Our king has written a braid letter,
 And seald it with his hand,
 And sent it to Sir Patrick Spens,
 Was walking on the strand.
- 4 "To Noroway, to Noroway,
 To Noroway oer the faem; over the foam
 The king's daughter of Noroway,
 'T is thou maun bring her hame." must home
- 5 The first word that Sir Patrick read,
 Sae loud, loud laughed he;
 The neist word that Sir Patrick read, next
 The tear blinded his ee. eye
- 6 "O wha is this has done this deed,
 And tauld the king o me,
 To send us out at this time of the year
 To sail upon the sea?
- 7 "Be it wind, be it weet, be it hail, be it sleet,
 Our ship must sail the faem;
 The king's daughter of Noroway,
 'T is we must fetch her hame." home
- 8 They hoysed their sails on Monenday morn, hoisted
 Wi a' the speed they may;
 They hae landed in Noroway,
 Upon a Wodensday.

- 9 They hadna been a week, a week
In Noroway but twae,
When that the lords o Noroway
Began aloud to say:
- 10 “Ye Scottishmen spend a’ our king’s goud, gold
And a’ our queenis fee!” wealth
“Ye lie, ye lie, ye liars loud.
Fu loud I hear ye lie! very loud
- 11 “For I brought as much white monie silver
As gane my men and me, will suffice
And I brought a half-fou o gude red goud bushel
Out oer the sea wi me.
- 12 “Make ready, make ready, my merrymen a’,
Our gude ship sails the morn:”
“Now, ever alake! my master dear, alack
I fear a deadly storm!
- 13 “I saw the new moon late yestreen, yesternight
Wi the auld moon in her arm;
And if we gang to sea, master,
I fear we’ll come to harm.”
- 14 They hadna sailed a league, a league,
A league but barely three,
When the lift grew dark, and the wind blew loud sky
And gurly grew the sea. grim
- 15 The ankers brak, and the topmasts lap, sprang
It was sic a deadly storm, such
And the waves came oer the broken ship,
Till a’ her sides were torn.
- 16 “O where will I get a gude sailor,
To take my helm in hand,
Till I get up to the tall topmast,
To see if I can spy land?”
- 17 “O here am I, a sailor gude,
To take the helm in hand,
Till you go up to the tall topmast;
But I fear you’ll neer spy land.”
- 18 He hadna gane a step, a step,
A step but barely ane,
When a bout flew out of our goodly ship, bolt
And the salt sea it came in.
- 19 “Gae fetch a web o the silken claithe, cloth

Another o the twine,
 And wap them into our ship's side,
 And letna the sea come in.”

coarse linen
 stuff
 let not

20 They fetched a web o the silken claith,
 Another o the twine,
 And they wapped them roun that gude ship's side,
 But still the sea came in.

wrapped

21 O laith, laith were our gude Scots lords
 To weet their cork-heeld shoon;
 But lang or a' the play was playd,
 They wat their hats aboon.

loath
 shoes
 before
 wetted above

22 And mony was the feather-bed
 That flattered on the faem,
 And mony was the gude lord's son
 That never mair cam hame.

floated foam

23 The ladyes wrang their fingers white,
 The maidens tore their hair,
 A' for the sake of their true loves,
 For them they'll see na mair.

24 O lang, lang may the ladyes sit,
 Wi their fans into their hand,
 Before they see Sir Patrick Spens
 Come sailing to the strand.

25 And lang, lang may the maidens sit,
 Wi their goud kaims in their hair,
 A' waiting for their ain dear loves,
 For them they'll see na mair.

combs
 own

26 O forty miles off Aberdeen
 'T is fifty fathoms deep,
 And there lies gude Sir Patrick Spens,
 Wi the Scots lords at his feet

9. Lamkin

Child 93A

This atrocity ballad is from the repertoire of Mrs Brown of Falkland.

1 It's Lamkin was a mason good
 as ever built wi stane;
 He built Lord Wearie's castle
 but payment got he nane.

with stone
 none

2 “O pay me, Lord Wearie,

- come, pay me my fee:"
 "I canna pay you, Lamkin,
 for I maun gang oer the sea." cannot
 must go over
- 3 "O pay me now, Lord Wearie,
 come, pay me out o hand:" out of hand (= immediately)
 "I canna pay you, Lamkin,
 unless I sell my land."
- 4 "O gin ye winna pay me,
 I here sall mak a vow,
 Before that ye come hame again,
 ye sall hae cause to rue." if you will not
 shall make
 home
 shall have
- 5 Lord Wearie got a bonnie ship,
 to sail the saut sea faem; salt sea foam
 Bade his lady weel the castle keep, well
 ay till he should come hame. always
- 6 But the nourice was a fause limmer nurse wretch
 as eer hung on a tree;
 She laid a plot wi Lamkin,
 whan her lord was oer the sea.
- 7 She laid a plot wi Lamkin,
 when the servants were awa, away
 Loot him in at a little shot-window let hinged window
 and brought him to the ha. hall
- 8 "Oh whare's a' the men o this house,
 that ca me Lamkin?" all
 call ?(*Lamkin* = a nickname)
 "They're at the barn-well thrashing;
 't will be lang ere they come in." long before
- 9 "Oh whare's the women o this house,
 that ca me Lamkin?"
 "They're at the far well washing;
 't will be lang ere they come in."
- 10 "Oh whare's the bairns o this house,
 that ca me Lamkin?" children
 "They're at the school reading;
 't will be night or they come hame."
- 11 "Oh whare's the lady o this house,
 that ca's me Lamkin?"
 "She's up in her bower sewing;
 but we soon can bring her down."
- 12 Then Lamkin's tane a sharp knife,
 that hung down by his gaire, taken
 by his knee

o the rich than o the poor?"

- 23 But ere three months were at an end,
 Lord Wearie came again;
 But dowie, dowie was his heart sad
 when first he came hame.
- 24 "O wha's blood is this," he says,
 "that lies in the chamer?" chamber
 "It is your lady's heart's blood;
 't is as clear as the lamer." amber
- 25 "O wha's blood is this," he says,
 "that lies in my ha?"
 "It is your young son's heart's blood;
 't is the clearest ava." of all
- 26 O sweetly sang the black-bird
 that sat upon the tree;
 But sairer grat Lamkin, cried
 when he was condemned to die.
- 27 And bonny sang the mavis, thrush
 out o the thorny brake; thicket
 But sairer grat the nourice,
 when she was burnt at the stake.

10. Johnie Armstrong
 Child 169A

A Border ballad first published in 1658. The Armstrongs raided both sides of the Borders (the lawless district between England and Scotland) and in 1530 King James V of Scotland decided to bring the district under control. The ballad celebrates Johnie as an English hero (he is said to live in Westmoreland), the victim of Scottish treachery.

- 1 There dwelt a man in faire Westmerland
 Ionne Armestrong men did him call,
 He had nither lands nor rents coming in, neither
 Yet he kept eight score men in his hall.
- 2 He had horse and harness for them all,
 Goodly steeds were all milk-white;
 O the golden bands an about their necks, on
 And their weapons, they were all alike.
- 3 Newes then was brought unto the king
 That there was sicke a won as hee, such a one
 That lived lyke a bold out-law,
 And robbed all the north country.

- 4 The king he writt an a letter then, (an pleonastic)
 A letter which was large and long;
 He signed it with his owne hand,
 And he promised to doe him no wrong.
- 5 When this letter came Ionne untill, to John
 His heart it was as blythe as birds on the tree:
 “Never was I sent for before any king,
 My father, my grandfather, nor none but mee.
- 6 “And if wee goe the king before,
 I would we went most orderly;
 Every man of you shall have his scarlet cloak,
 Laced with silver laces three.
- 7 “Every won of you shall have his velvett coat, one
 Laced with silver lace so white;
 O the golden bands an about your necks,
 Black hatts, white feathers, all alyke.”
- 8 By the morrow morninge at ten of the clock,
 Towards Edenborough gon was hee,
 And with him all his eight score men;
 Good lord, it was a goodly sight for to see!
- 9 When Ionne came befower the king,
 He fell downe on his knee;
 “O pardon, my souveraine leige,” he said,
 “O pardon my eight score men and mee!”
- 10 “Thou shalt have no pardon, thou traytor strong,
 For thy eight score men nor thee;
 For to-morrow morning by ten of the clock,
 Both thou and them shall hang on the gallow-tree.”
- 11 But Ionne look’d over his left shoulder,
 Good Lord, what a grievous look looked hee!
 Saying, “Asking grace of a graceles face -
 Why there is none for you nor me.”
- 12 But Ionne had a bright sword by his side,
 And it was made of the mettelle so free, noble
 That had not the king stept his foot aside,
 He had smitten his head from his faire bodde. body
- 13 Saying, Fight on, my merry men all,
 And see that none of you be taine; taken
 For rather then men shall say we were hang’d,
 Let them report how we were slaine.
- 14 Then, God wott, faire Eddenburrough rose, knows

Come oer my fair bodie.”

- 6 “O Marie, put on your robes o black,
Or else your robes of brown,
For ye maun gang wi me the night, must tonight
To see fair Edinbro town.”
- 7 “I winna put on my robes o black, will not
Nor yet my robes o brown;
But I’ll put on my robes o white,
To shine through Edinbro town.”
- 8 When she gaed up the Cannogate,
She laughd loud laughters three;
But whan she cam down the Cannogate
The tear blinded her ee. eye
- 9 When she gaed up the Parliament stair,
The heel cam off her shee; shoe
And lang or she cam down again before
She was condemned to dee. die
- 10 When she cam down the Cannogate,
The Cannogate sae free,
Many a ladie lookd oer her window,
Weeping for this ladie.
- 11 “Ye need nae weep for me,” she says, not
“Ye need nae weep for me;
For had I not slain mine own sweet babe,
This death I wadna dee. would not
- 12 “Bring me a bottle of wine,” she says,
“The best that eer ye hae, ever have
That I may drink to my weil-wishers, well-wishers
And they may drink to me.
- 13 “Here’s a health to the jolly sailors,
That sail upon the main; ocean
Let them never let on to my father and mother reveal
But what I’m coming hame. except that home
- 14 “Here’s a health to the jolly sailors,
That sail upon the sea;
Let them never let on to my father and mother
That I cam here to dee.
- 15 “Oh little did my mother think,
The day she cradled me,
What lands I was to travel through,
What death I was to dee.

- 16 “Oh little did my father think,
The day she held me up,
What lands I was to travel through,
What death I was to dee.
- 17 “Last night I washd the queen’s feet,
And gently laid her down;
And a’ the thanks I’ve gotten the nicht tonight
To be hangd in Edinbro town!
- 18 “Last nicht there were four Maries,
The nicht ther’l be but three;
There was Marie Seton, and Marie Beton,
And Marie Carmichael, and me.”

12. Inter diabolus et virgo

MS Rawlinson D 328, Bodleian Libray (first half of 15th century). Text from *The Ballad Book*, ed. by MacEdward Leach, New York, Barnes 1975 (1955), pp. 47-8.

- 1 Wol ye here a wonder thyng will you
Betwyxt a mayd and the foule fend? fiend (=devil)
- 2 Thys spake the fend to the mayd,
“Beleve on me, mayd, to day.
- 3 “Mayd, mote y thi leman be, if I may
Wyssedom y wolle teche the: teach
- 4 “All the wyssedom off the world,
Hyf thou wolt be true and forward holde. if compact
- 5 “What ys hyer than ys the tre? higher
What is dypper than ys the see? deeper
- 6 “What is scharpper than ys the thorne?
What ys loder than is the horne? louder
- 7 What is longger an ys the way? than
What ys rader than is the day? redder
- 8 “What ys bether than is the bred? better
What ys scharper than ys the dede? death
- 9 “What grenner an ys the wode? greener
What is sweetter an ys the note? nut
- 10 “What is swifter an ys the wynd?
What ys recher an ys the kyng? richer (=powerful)

- 3 The knight, of courage stout and brave,
A wife he did desire to have.
- 4 He knocked at the ladie's gate
One evening when it was late.
- 5 The eldest sister let him in,
And pin'd the door with a silver pin.
- 6 The second sister she made his bed,
And laid soft pillows under his head.
- 7 The youngest daughter that same night,
She went to bed to this young knight.
- 8 And in the morning, when it was day,
These words unto him she did say:
- 9 'Now you have had your will,' quoth she,
'I pray, sir knight, will you marry me?'
- 10 The young brave knight to her replied,
'Thy suit, fair maid, shall not be deny'd.
- 11 'If thou canst answer me questions three,
This very day will I marry thee,'
- 12 'Kind sir, in love, O then,' quoth she,
'Tell me what your three questions be.'
- 13 'O what is longer than the way,
Or what is deeper than the sea?
- 14 'Or what is louder than the horn?
Or what us sharper than a thorn?
- 15 'Or what is greener than the grass,
Or what is worse then a woman was?'
- 16 'O love is longer than the way,
And hell is deeper than the sea.
- 17 'And thunder is louder than the horn,
And hunger is sharper than a thorn.
- 18 'And poyson is greener than the grass,
And the Devil is worse than woman was.' (woman=Eve)
- 19 When she these questions answered had,
The knight became exceeding glad.

- 20 And having truly try'd her wit,
He much commended her for it.
- 21 And after, as it is verifi'd,
He made of her his lovely bride.
- 22 So now, fair maidens all, adieu,
This song I dedicate to you.
- 23 I wish that you may constant prove
Unto the man that you do love.

Child 1C is from Motherwell's Ms (1825)

- 1 There was a knicht riding frae the east, knight from
Sing the Cather banks, the bonnie brume
Wha had been wooing at monie a place.
And ye may beguile a young thing sune
- 2 He came unto a widow's door,
And speird whare her three dochters were. inquired daughters
- 3 The auldest ane's to a washing gane,
The second's to a baking gane. oldest one gone
- 4 The youngest ane's to a wedding gane,
And it will be nicht or she be hame. night before home
- 5 He sat him doun upon a stane,
Till thir three lasses came tripping hame. stone
- 6 The auldest ane's to the bed making,
And the second ane's to the sheet spreading.
- 7 The youngest ane was bauld and bricht, bold and bright
And she was to lye with this unco knicht. strange
- 8 'Gin ye will answer me questions ten, if
The morn ye sall be made may ain. shall own
- 9 'O what is heigher nor the tree? than
And what is deeper nor the sea?
- 10 'Or what is heavier nor the lead?
And what is better nor the breid? bread
- 11 'O what is whiter nor the milk?
Or what is safter nor the silk? softer
- 12 'Or what is sharper nor a thorn?

Or what is louder nor a horn?

- 13 'Or what is greener nor the grass,
Or what is waur nor a woman was?' worse
- 14 'O heaven is higher nor the tree,
And hell is deeper nor the sea.
- 15 'O sin is heavier nor the lead,
The blessing's better nor the bread.
- 16 'The snaw is whiter nor the milk, snow
And the down is safter nor the silk.
- 17 'Hunger is sharper nor a thorn,
And shame is louder nor a horn.
- 18 'The pies are greener nor the grass, (green) woodpeckers
And Clootie's waur nor a woman was.'
- 19 As sune as she the fiend did name,
He flew awa in a blazing flame. away

14. The Elfin Knight

Child 2A, Additions

Child suspects that version A, from a broadside of c. 1670, conflates the motif of the encounter with a preternatural being (as in 66, Child 4) with that of lovers setting each other impossible tasks.

*My plaid awa, my plaid awa,
And ore the hill and far awa, over away
And far awa to Norrowa,
My plaid shall not be blown awa.*

- 1 The elphin knight sits on yon hill,
Ba, ba, ba, lilli ba
He blows his horn both lowd and shril. blows
The wind hath blown my plaid awa
- 2 He blowes it east, he blowes it west,
He blowes it where he lyketh best.
- 3 'I wish that horn were in my kist, chest
Yea, and the knight in my armes two.'
- 4 She had no sooner these words said,
When that the knight came to her bed.
- 5 'Thou art over young a maid,' quoth he, too
'Married with me thou il wouldst be.'

- 6 'I have a sister younger than I,
And she was married yesterday.'
- 7 'Married with me if thou wouldst be,
A courtesie thou must do to me.
- 8 'For thou must shape a sark to me, shirt
Without any cut or heme,' quoth he.
- 9 'Thou must shape it knife-and-sheerlesse, without knife or scissors
And also sue it needle-threadlesse.' sew without needle and thread
- 10 'If that piece of courtesie I do to thee,
Another thou must do to me.
- 11 'I have an aiker of good ley-hand, acre fallow
Which lyeth low by yon sea-strand.
- 12 'For thou must eare it with thy horn, plow
So thou must sow it with thy corn.
- 13 'And bigg a cart of stone and lyme, build
Robin Redbreast he must trail it hame.
- 14 'Thou must barn it in a mouse-holl,
And thrash it into thy shoes' soll.
- 15 'And thou must winnow it in thy looff, palm of the hand
And also seck it in thy glove. sack
- 16 'For thou must bring it over the sea,
And thou must bring it dry home to me.
- 17 'When thou hast gotten thy turns well done, tasks
Then come to me and get thy sark then.'
- 18 'I'l not quite my plaid for my life; quit
Its haps my seven bairns and my wife.' covers children
The wind shall not blow my plaid awa
- 19 'May maidenhead I'l then keep still,
Let the elphin knight do what he will.'
The wind's not blown my plaid awa

In this version, printed in Child's vol. II (Additions, p. 496, "communicated in 1884"), two estranged lovers spite each other through a third person.

- 1 'O where are you going?' 'To Scarbro fair.'
Savoury, sage, rosemary and thyme

- 4 'Wha's aucht they sheep?' whose are these sheep
'They are mine and my mither's.' mother's
- 5 'How monie o them are mine?' many
'A' they that hae blue tails.' have
- 6 'I wiss ye were on yon tree:' wish
'And a gude ladder under me.'
- 7 'And the ladder for to break:'
'And you for to fa down.' fall
- 8 'I wiss ye were in yon sie:' sea
'And a gude bottom under me.'
- 9 'And the bottom for to break:'
'And ye to be drowned.'

16. Lady Isabel and the Elf-Knight
Child 4

From Buchan's *Ballads of the North of Scotland*, 1828.

- 1 Fair lady Isabel sits in her bower sewing,
Aye as the gowans grow gay daisies
There she heard an elf-knight blawing his horn. blowing
The first morning in May.
- 2 'If I had yon horn that I hear blawing,
And yon elf-knight to sleep in my bosom.'
- 3 This maiden had scarcely these words spoken,
Till in at her window the elf-knight has luppen. leaped
- 4 'It's a very strange matter, fair maiden,' said he,
'I canna blaw my horn but ye call on me. cannot
- 5 'But will ye go to yon greenwood side?
If ye canna gang, I will cause you to ride.'
- 6 He leapt on a horse, and she on another,
And they rode on to the greenwood together.
- 7 'Light down, light down, lady Isabel,' said he,
'We are come to the place where ye are to die.'
- 8 'Hae mercy, hae mercy, kind sir, on me, have
Till ance my dear father and mother I see.' once
- 9 'Seven king's-daughters here hae I slain,

And ye shall be the eight o them.' of

- 10 'O sit down a while, lay your head on my knee,
That we may hae some rest before that I die.'
- 11 She stroakd him sae fast, the nearer he did creep,
Wi a sma charm she lulld him fast asleep.
- 12 Wi his ain sword-belt sae fast as she ban him, with own bound
Wi his ain dag-durk sae sair as she dang him. dagger struck
- 13 'If seven king's-daughters here ye hae slain,
Lye ye here, a husband to them a'.' all

This version is from Missouri (1940), in *The Penguin Book of Folk Ballads of the English-Speaking World*, ed. by A. B. Friedman, Penguin 1977 (1956), pp. 12-3.

- 1 'Go steal your father's weight in gold,
Likewise your mother's fee,
And two of the best horses that there are,
For there stands thirty-three.'
- 2 She stole her father's weight in gold,
And likewise her mother's fee,
And two of the best horses that there were,
For there stood thirty-three.
- 3 She mounted on a milk-white steed
And he upon a bay;
They rode, they rode through the merry green woods
Till they came to the side of the sea.
- 4 'Dismount, dismount, my pretty fair maid,
Dismount, dismount, I say.
There are six king's daughters I've drowned here
And you the seventh shall be.
- 5 'You must take off those costly robes
And lay them down by me.
They are too costly, ah! by far
To rot in the bottom of the sea.'
- 6 'If I take off these costly robes
And lay them down by thee,
You must turn yourself all round and round
All for to face that tree.'
- 7 He turned himself all round and round
All for to face the tree;
And manfully she picked him up

And flung him into the sea.

- 8 'Lie there, lie there, you false villain,
Lie there instead of me.
If there are six king's daughters you've drowned here,
Go, keep them company.'
- 9 'O, give me hold of your lily-white finger,
Or give me your whole hand,
And you shall be the lady of my house
And own one half of my land.'
- 10 'I will not give you my lily-white finger,
I won't give you my whole hand;
I will not be the lady of your house
Or own one half of your land.'
- 11 She mounted on the milk-white steed,
But now she led the bay.
She rode, she rode through the merry green woods
Till she came to the parrot's tree.
- 12 'O Polly, Polly, pretty Polly,
Don't tell any tales of me.
And your cage shall be lined with the yellow beaten gold
And locked with a silver key.'
- 13 The old man heard the parrot's cry
And unto her did say,
'O Polly, Polly, pretty Polly,
What makes you cry so long today?'
- 14 'The old cat came to my cage door,
And that's what worried me.
I called upon your pretty Caroline
For to drive the old cat away.'