Lyrics carols ballads

I. Lyrics
II. Carols
III. Ballads


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
   Duncan 1 36, Brown 1 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
With foules song;
Oc now negheth windes blast
And weder strong.

5  Ei, ei, what this night is long,
And Ich with wel michel wrong
Sorwe and murne and fast.

2. Somer is y-comen in
   Duncan 1 110, Brown 1 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 the cow lows for the calf
lowth after calve cou; |

Bullok sterteth, bukke verteth |
merye sing, cuckou! |
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 duobus non debet dici preter eos qui dicunt pedem. Canitur autem sic. Tacentibus ceteris unus inchoat cum his qui tenent pedem. Et cum uenerit ad primam notam post crucem; inchoat alius + sic de ceteris. Singuli uero repausent ad pausaciones scriptas, non alibi; spacio unius longe note.

Sing cuccu nu, Sing cuccu! | Hoc repetit unus quociens opus est.
Pes |
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, |
The fishes in the flod, |
And I mon waxe wod. |
Much sorwe I walke with |
5 For beste of bon and blod. |
   birds wood |
   sea |
   must go mad |
   sorrow |
   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 briddles roune blossoms birds’ song
That al this blisse bringeth.
Dayeseyes in this dales, daisies these (= the)
Notes swete of nyghtegales,
Ech fowel hire song singeth.
The threstelcok him threteth oo,
Away is here wynter wo
When woderove springeth.

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
Waxen al with wille.
The mone mandeth hire ble,
The lilie lufsom is to se,
The fenyl and the fille.
Wowen thise Wilde drakes,
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.

The mone mandeth hire lyght,
So doth the semly sonne bryght
When briddes singen breme;
Dewes donken the dounes,
Deres with here derne rounes
Domes for to deme;
Wormes wowen under cloude,
Wommen waxen wonder proude,
If me shal wonte wille of on,
This wynne wele I wil forgon
And wight in wode be fleme.

Winter wakeneth al my care
Brown2 9

Another song of winter sorrow, this one explicitly religious.
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 biryd 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
When 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
Of mi sorwe she may me save, 
would be renewed for me
12 Joy and blisse were me newe.
8. Three Sorrowful Tidings
   Brown1 12a

Ech day me cumeth tydinges thre,
For wel swithe sore ben he:
The on is that Ich shal henne,
That other that Ich not hwenne;
5  The thridde is my meste care,
    That Ich not hwider Ich shal fare.

9. Whan mine eyen misteth
    Duncan1 44, Brown1 71

Whan mine eyen misteth,
And mine heren sisseth,
And my nose coldeth,
And my tongue foldeth,
5  And my rode slaketh,
    And mine lippes blaketh,
    And my mouth genneth,
    And my spotel renneth,
    And min her riseth,
10  And min herte griseth,
    And mine hondes bivieth,
    And mine fet stivieth -
    Al to late, al to late,
    Whan the bere is at the gate.
15  Than I shal flit
    From bedde to flore,
    From flore to here,
    From here to bere,
    From bere to pit,
20  And the pit fordit.
    Than lith min hous uppe myn nese,
    Of al this world ne give Ich a pese!

10. Love is soft, love is swet
    Duncan1 6, Brown1 53

Love is soft, love is swet,
    love is good sware;
Love is muche tene,
    love is muchel care.
Love is blissene mest,
    love is bot yare.
4  Love is wandred and wo,
    with for to fare.
Love is hap who it haveth,
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  unfaithful  
many unlele.  

Love is staleworthe and strong  sturdy  
to striden on stede;  mount a horse  
Love is loveliche a thing  necessary for women  
to wommane nede;  fierce  
Love is hardi and hot  glowing coal  
as glowinde glede;  

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  her cheeks to wet  
hire wonges to wete.  
Love is hap, who it haveth,  to be inflamed with  
on for to hete.  

16  Love is wis, love is war,  wise  prudent  
and wilful ansete.  strong-willed adversary  

Love is the softeste thing  that may sleep  
in herte may slepe;  strong  
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,  feed  
love mai us fede.  

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,  the truth is evident  
soth is y-sene,  begins with sorrow  
Love comseth with care  grief  
and endeth with tene,  with woman  

28  Mid lady, mid wive,
mid maide, mid quene.  

queen (?harlot)

11. Dore, go thou stille  
Duncan1 12

Dore, go thou stille,  
Go thou stille, stille;  
Yate, Ich have in the boure  
4 Y-don al wyn wille, wille.

door quietly  
gate I bower  
accomplished desire

12. So longe Ich have, lady  
Duncan1 14

So longe Ich have, lady,  
Y-hoved at thi gate,  
That mi fot is frore, faire lady,  
4 For thy love faste to the stake.

lingered  
foot frozen  
gate-post

13. I syng of a mayden  
Duncan1 79

MS Sloane 2593

I syng of a mayden  
that is makeles,  
King of alle kinges
4 to here sone she ches.

peerless  
as her son she chose  
where

He cam also stylle  
ther his moder was,  
As dew in Aprylle
8 that falleth on the gras.

as silently  
where

He cam also stylle  
to his moderes bowr,  
As dew in Aprille
12 that falleth on the flour.

He cam also stille  
ther his moder lay,  
As dew in Aprylle
16 that falleth on the spray.

bower  
flower

branch

Moder and mayden  
was never non but she -
Wel may swych a lady
20 Godes moder be!
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).

**14. Hit was upon a Shere Thursday**

Duncan 112, Brown 25, Child 23

Hit was upon a Shere Thursday
that oure Loverd aros,
Ful milde were the wordes

He spac to Judas:

"Judas thou most to Jurselem
oure mete for to bigge;
Thratti plates of selver
thou bere upon thi rigge;
Thou comest fer i the brode strete, 
fer i the brode strete;
Some of thine kinnesmen
ther thou mayst y-mete."

He mette with his suster
the swikele wommon.
"Judas, thou were worthe
me stonde thee with ston.
Judas, thou were worthe
me stonde thee with ston,
For the false prophete
that thou bilevest upon."

"Be stille, leve suster, 
thin herte thee tobreke!
Wiste min Loverd Crist,
ful wel he wolde be wreke."

"Judas, go thou on the rok, 
heighe upon the ston, 
Lay thin heved i my barm, 
slep thou thee anon."

Sone so Judas
of slepe was awake, 
Thrittle plates of selver
from him weren y-take.

He drow hymselfe by the top
that al it lavede ablode;

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Holy Thursday
our Lord arose
very mild
spoke
must go
our food buy
coins of silver
you are to carry on your back
you will go far in the highway
kinsmen
meet
met sister
deceitful
you would be worthy
to be stoned [*me = men]*

be quiet dear sister
may your heart break
if my Lord Christ knew
thoroughly avenged
go on to the cliff
high upon the crag
head in lap
go straight to sleep
as soon as
from sleep
taken
he tore his hair
so that it all streamed with blood
The Jewes out of Jurselem

36 awenden he were wode. thought he was mad

Forth hym com the riche Jew forward came
that highte Pilatus: was called
"Wilt thou selle thi Loverd is called
that highte Jesus?"

"I nil selle my Loverd will not
for nones kinnes aughte, no kind of possessions
But it be for the thritti plates unless
that he me bitaughte."

"Wilt thou selle thy Loverd any kind of
for enes kinnes golde?"
"Nay, but hit be for the plates no, unless it is
that he haven wolde.” wanted to have

In him com our Lord gon as our Lord came walking in
his postles satte at mete - apostles sat at their meal
"How sitte ye, postles,
and why nille ye ete? will not eat
"How sitte ye, postles,
and why nille ye ete?
Ich am aboght and y-sold bought and sold
56 today for oure mete.” food

Up stod him Judas, stood up
"Lord am I that frec?
I nas never on the stede was never in the place
60 ther me thee evel spec.” where men spoke evil of you

Up him stod Peter

and spak with al is mighte:

“Though Pilatus him come should come
with ten hundred knighe, knights
Though Pilatus him come
with ten hundred knighe,
Yet Ich wolde, Loverd,
for thi love fighte.” for the love of you

“Stille thou be, Peter, be quiet
wel I thee y-cnowe;
Thou wilt forsake me thryes thrice
72 er the cok him crowe.” 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,
   with bread and table-cloth
And served him of bred and cloth,
   would befit
 4 as every kyng befalle.

Steven out of kichen cam
   a boar’s head in his hands
with bores hed on honde,
   star which was
He saw a sterre was fayr and bright
   over Bedlem stonde.
8

He cast adown the bores hed,
   and went into the halle:
and served him of bred and cloth,
   as every kyng befalle.

‘I forsak thee, Kyng Herowdes
   who is
and thy werkes alle.
12 ‘I forsak thee, Kyng Herowdes,
   do you lack food
and thy werkes alle,
   payment
Ther is a chyld in Bedlem born
   fine clothing
16 is better that we alle.’

‘What aileth thee, Steven?
   are you mad
what is thee befalle?
   are you beginning to rave
Lakketh thee either mete or drynk?
   do you lack food
   in Kyng Herowdes halle?’
20 I lack

‘Lakketh me neither mete ne drynk
   in Kyng Herowdes halle;
Ther is chyld in Bedlem born
   in our necessity
   who is
 24 is beter than we alle.’

‘What aileth thee, Steven, ar thou wod,
   are you mad
or thou wynnest to brede?
   are you beginning to rave
Lakketh thee either gold or fee
   payment
   fine clothing
28 or any ryche wede?

‘Lakketh me neither gold ne fee,
   fine clothing
ne non ryche wede;
Ther is a chyld in Bedlem born
   in our necessity
   who is
32 shal help us at our nede.’

‘That is also soth, Steven,
   as true
also soth y-wis,
   as true indeed
As this capoun crowe shal
   capon
36 that lyth here in myn dish.’
That word was not so sone said, no sooner
that word in that halle,
The capoun crew *Christus natus est* among the lordes alle.

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

Token they Stevene they took
and stoned hym in the way;
And therfore is his even eve
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 lovet withoutyn governance, moderation
Offyme 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
Ther hertes to feyn
Ther mowthes to pleyn
Ther displesauns.
compel
their hearte falsely to cause
utter
discontent

Whych is in dede
10 But feyned drede -
So God me spede -
And dowbilnys;
Ther othes to bede
Ther lyves to lede
only feigned anguish
so help me God
duplicity
their oaths to promise
to conduct their lives properly

And profer mede -
Newfangellnys.
offer reward
pursuit of novelty

For when they pray,
Ye shall have nay
Whatso they say -
entreat
you will get nothing
whatever

Beware fför shame!
20 For every daye
They waite ther pray
Wherso they may,
lie in wait for their prey
wheresoever
And make butt game.
only amuse themselves

25 Then semeth me
Ye may well se
They be so fre
it seems to me
They be so fre
In every plase,
place
Hitt were peté
it would be a pity

30 Butt they shold be
Begeled, pardé,
if they were not
beguiled, by God
Withoutyn grase.
without mercy

19. I am sory 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 murnyng, away!
Y am forsake,
Another ys take,
No more murne yc may.
away with care
sorrow
forsaken
taken

I am sory for her sake,
Yc may wel ete and drynke;
Whanne yc scelepe yc may not wake,
So much on here yc thenke.
think

5 Care away, etc.
I am brought in suche a bale,  to such grief
And brought in suche a pyne,  torment
Whanne yc ryse up of my bed,  it is my pleasure to dine well
Me liste wel to dyne.

15  Care away, etc.

I am brought in suche a pyne,
Y-brought in suche a bale,
Whanne yc have ryghte god wyne,  good wine (=a better love)
Me liste drynke non ale.

20  Care away, etc.

20. Westron wynde when wyll thow blow?
Duncan2 105

Westron wynde when wyll thow blow?  western
The smalle rayne downe can rayne.  drizzling  does rain (=keeps raining)
Cryst, yf my love wer in my armes
And I yn my bed agayne!

21. Tutivillus, the devyl of hell
Duncan2 137

Tutivillus, the devyl of hell,
He wryteth har names, sothe to tel,
Ad missam garulantes.
writes their names   truth
of those chattering at mass

Bett wer be attome for ay,
Than her to serve the devil to pay,
Sic vana famulantes.
  it would be better to be at home for ever
  here   to his liking
thus serving vainly

Thes women that sitteth the church about,
Thai beth al of the develes rowte,
Divina impedientes.
  they are   devil’s company
  hindering devotions

10  But thai be stil, he wil ham quell,
With kene crokes draw hem to hell,
Ad puteum, multum flentes.
  unless they keep quiet   them destroy
  sharp hooks   them
  to the pit, greatly wailing

For his love that you der bought,
Hold you stil and jangel noght,
Sed prece deponentes.
  the love of him who dearly bought you
  keep silent   chatter not
  but remain bowed in prayer

15  The blis of heven than may ye wyn;
God bryng us al to his in,
Amen! amen! dicentes.
  then
lodging
saying
22. Spend, and God schal sende
Duncan2 149

Spende, and God schal sende;
Spare, and ermor care;

Non peni, non ware,
Non catel, non care -
hoard  evermore worry
no penny  merchandise
no goods  worries

5 Go! peni, go!

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 ababbc). 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 .
fful seld . Covetise hath dominacioun .
In Every place . Right hath residence .

4 Neyther in towne ne feld . Similacion .
Ther is truly in every cas . Consolacioun .
The pore peple no tyme hase . but right .
Men may fynd day ne nyght . Adulacioun .

8 Nowe reigneth treuth in every mannys sight .

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

ich herde men upon mold
make muche mon,  earth
hou he ben y-tened     great lamentation
of here tilyinge:     how they are harassed
 gode yeres and corn     in their farming
bothe ben a-gon;       good years and corn-crops
ne kepen here no sawe    both have gone
ne no song singe.      they care to hear no tales
Now we mote werche,  
nis ther non other won,  
May ich no lengere  
live with my lesinge;  
Yet ther is a bitterer  
bit to the bon,  
For ever the ferthe peni  
mot to the kinge.  

Thus we carpen for the king,  
and caren ful colde,  

And wenen for to kevere,  
and ever ben a-cast;  
Whoso hath any god,  
hopeth he nought to holde,  
But ever the levest  
we lesen a-last.  

Lither is to lese  
ther as litel is,  
And haven many hynen  
that hopen therto;  
The hayward heteth us harm  
to haven of his;  
The bailif beckneth us bale  
and weneth wel do;  
The wodeward wayteth us wo  
that loken under rys;  
Ne may us rise no rest,  
riches ne ro.  
Thus me pileth the poure  
that is of lite pris:  
Nede in swete and in swink  
swinde mot so.  

Nede he mot swynde  
(though he hade wore)  
That nath nought an hood  
his hed for to hide!  
Thus Wil walketh in lond,  
and lawe is forlore,  
And al is piked of the poure  
the prikeres pride.  

Thus men pileth the poure  
and piketh ful clene,  
The riche men reimen  
withouten any right;  
Her londes and her ledes  
lyen ful lene  
Thurgh bidding of bailifs,
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,
the clerk and the knight. by baron and peasant
Thus Wil walketh in lond,
and wandred is wene cleric
Falsshipe fatteth poverty is expected
and marreth with might.

Stont stille in the stede he stands unmoved in his place
and halt him ful turne behaves most sternly
That maketh beggers go he who
with burdoun and bagges. staff
35 Thus we ben hunted from corner to corner
from hale to hurne;
That er werede robes we who formerly wore robes
nou weren ragges.

Yet comen bideles wear
with ful muche bost: beadle (tax-collectors)
‘Greythe me silver pay me
 to the grene waxe;
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 roast hens
hennes arost,
Fair on fish-day fast day
laumprey and lax; lamprey salmon
Forth to the chepinge!’ - nothing is to be gained by arguing
 gayneth no chost,
Though I selle my bil logging axe
and my bot-stax.

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 shall be ‘foul cherl’, shall be called ‘foul peasant’
though they han the fille;
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;
50 Ayein this cachereles komen what I previously saved
thus I mot care;
Cometh the maister bidel, against the time these catch-polls
brist as a bore,
 chief beadle
bristling like a boar
Saith he wille my bigging
bring 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,
Fortho 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 breden 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!
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, except flower branch
Cokaygn is of fairir sight.
What is ther in Paradis pleasure
Bot grasse and flure and grene ris?
Thogh ther be joie and gret dute, except food except fruit

10 Ther nis met bote 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
What ther wonith men no mo. where dwell
In Cokaigene is met and drink food
Withute care, how, and swink;
The met is trie, the drink is clere, excellent

20 To none, russin, and sopper.
I sigge forsoth, boutre were, light meal
Ther nis lond on erthe is pere;
Under heven nis lond, iwisse, say without doubt
Of so mochil joi and blisse.

25 Ther is mani swete sighte;
Al is dai, nis ther no nighte. indeed
Ther nis baret nother strif, conflict neither
Nis ther no deth, ac ever lif;
Ther nis lac of met no cloth, but

30 Ther nis man no womman wroth, lack of food and clothing
Ther nis serpent, wolf, no fox,
Hors no capil, kowe no ox,
Ther nis schepe no swine no gote,
No non horwg, la, God it wote,

35 Nother harace nother stode -
The lond is ful of other gode. horse-breeding establishment stud
Nis ther flei, fle, no lowse;
In cloth, in toune, bed, no house;
Ther nis dunnir, slete, no hawle,

40 No non vile worme no snawile, fly, flea
No non storme, rein, no winde.
Ther nis man no womman blinde,
Ok al is game, joi, and gle.

45 Wel is him that ther mai be! but pleasure entertainment
Ther beth rivers gret and fine are
Of oile, melk, honi, and wine;  
Watir servith ther to nothing  
Bot to sight and to waiissing.  
Ther is mani maner frute -  
except to look at washing  
kinds of fruit  
Al is solas and dedute.  
Ther is a wel fair abbei  
except to look at washing  
Ther beth bowris and halles:  
Ther beth bowris and halles:  
bowsers  
Al of pasteiis beth the walles,  
Al of pasteiis beth the walles,  
pasties  
Of fleis, of fisse, and rich met.  
The likfullist that man mai et.  
Fluren cakes beth the schingles alle  
Fluren cakes beth the schingles alle  
flour shingles  
The pinnes beth fat podinges -  
The pinnes beth fat podinges -  
pegs puddings  
Rich met to princes and kinges.  
Rich met to princes and kinges.  
meat  
Man mai therof et inogh,  
Al with right and noght with wogh.  
Man mai therof et inogh,  
Al with right and noght with wogh.  
wrong  
To stoute and sterne, mek and bold.  
To stoute and sterne, mek and bold.  
proud and fierce , meek  
Ther is a cloister, fair and light,  
Brod and lang, of sembli sight;  
The pilers of that cloister alle  
The pilers of that cloister alle  
pillars  
Beth iturned of cristale,  
With har bas and capitale  
Beth iturned of cristale,  
With har bas and capitale  
their base capital  
Of grene jaspe and rede corale.  
Of grene jaspe and rede corale.  
jasper  
In the praer is a tre  
Swithe likful for to se:  
The rote is gingeuir and galingale,  
The rote is gingeuir and galingale,  
root ginger galangal  
The siouns bet al sedwale,  
The siouns bet al sedwale,  
shoots zedoary (=aromatic plant)  
Trie maces beth the flure,  
The rind canel of swet odur,  
The frute gilofre of gode smakke.  
The rind canel of swet odur,  
The frute gilofre of gode smakke.  
clove flavour  
Of cucubes ther nis no lakke.  
The rind canel of swet odur,  
The frute gilofre of gode smakke.  
Of cucubes ther nis no lakke.  
cubebs (=spicy berries)  
Ther beth rosis of rede ble  
Ther beth rosis of rede ble  
colour  
And lilie likful forto se;  
Thai faloweth never dai no night.  
This agh be a swet sight!  
This agh be a swet sight!  
wither  
Ther beth .iij. willis in the abbei  
Ther beth .iij. willis in the abbei  
must  
Of triacle, and halwei,  
Of triacle, and halwei,  
healing ointment and water  
Of baum, and ek piement,  
Ever ernd to right rent.  
Of thai stremis al the molde  
Of thai stremis al the molde  
running profit  
Stonis preciuse, and golde.  
Stonis preciuse, and golde.  
small pearl  
Ther is saphir and uniune,  
Carbuncle and astiune,  
Smaragde, lugre, and prassiune,  
Carbuncle and astiune,  
Smaragde, lugre, and prassiune,  
large pearl  
Beril, onix, topasiune,  
Ametist and crisolite,  
Calcedun and epetite.  
Carbuncle and astiune,  
Smaragde, lugre, and prassiune,  
Beril, onix, topasiune,  
Ametist and crisolite,  
Calcedun and epetite.  
arstrion  
Calcedun and epetite.  
Calcedun and epetite.  
topaz  
90  
Ther beth briddes mani and fale:  
Throstil, thruisine, and nightingale,  
Ther beth briddes mani and fale:  
Throstil, thruisine, and nightingale,  
birds very many  
95
Chalandre, and wodwale,  calander woodwall (=oriole)
And other bridges without tale, countless
That stinteth never by har might stop their

100  Miri to sing dai and night.
Yite I do you mo to witte:
The gees irostid on the spitte yet let you know more
Fleeth to that ~abbai, God hit wot, roasted
And gredith: ‘Gees, al hote, al hot!’ fly knows

105  Hi bringeth garlek, gret plente, cry out
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.
Nis no spech of no drink, seasoned clove
Ak take inogh withute swink.
Whan the monkes gooth to masse, nothing is said about
Al the fenestres that beth of glasse but toil

115  Turneth into cristal bright
To give monkes more light.
iit was before
When the masses beth iseidi dressed
And the bokes up ileidi,
The cristal turnith into glasse in the midst of it

120  In state that hit rather wasse.
The yung monkes euch dai each
Aftir met goth to plai:
hawk fowl
Nis ther hauck no fule so swifte air
Bettir fleing bi the lifte

125  Than the monkes, heigh of mode, their sleeves hood
With har slevis and har hode. considers pleasure
When the abbot seeth ham flee, in the midst of it
That he holt for moc'h glee;
them
Ak naheles, al theramang, considers pleasure

130  He biddith ham light to evesang.
The monkes lightith noght adun, but farther with a rush
Ak furre fleeth in o randun. for himself sees
When the abbot him iseeth his
That is monkes fram him fleeth,

135  He taketh maidin of the route
down they
And turnith up hir white toute, girl company
each tabors
And betith the taburs with is hond
To make is monkes light to lond. tabors
When the monkes that iseeth, see

140  To the maid dun hi fleeth
And goth the wench al abute, down they
And thaketh 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
A wel fair processione.
Another abbei is therbi -

their light evening meal
Forsoth, a gret fair nunnerie,  
Up a river of swet milke,  
150 Whar is gret plente of silk.  
Whan the someris dai is hote,  
The yung nunnes takith a bote  
And doth ham forth in that river  
Bothe with oris and with stere.  
155 Whan hi beth fur fram the abbei,  
Hi makith ham nakid forto plei,  
And lepith dune into the brimme  
And doth ham sleilich forto swimme.  
The yung monkes that hi seeth:  
Hi doth ham up and forth hi fleeth,  
And commith to the nunnes anon,  
And snellich berith forth har prei  
To the mochil grei abbei,  
160 And techith the nunnes an oreisun  
With jambleve up and dun.  
The monke that wol be stalun gode  
And kan set aright is hode,  
He schal hab withoute danger  
xij. wives euch yere,  
Al throgh right and noght throgh grace,  
Fordo do himself solace,  
And thilk monke that slepith best,  
And doth his likam al to rest,  
170 Of him is hoppe, God hit wote,  
To be sone fadir abbot.  
Whose wol com that land to,  
Ful grete penance he mot do:  
Seve yere in swineis dritte  
175 He mote wade, wol ye iwitte,  
Lordinges gode and hend,  
Mot ye never of world wend  
F ort ye stond to yure cheance  
And fulfille that penance,  
That ye mote that lond ise  
Prey we God so mote hit be!  
180 Amen, pur seint charite.  
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,
On his bot-forke his burthen he bereth;
Hit is muche wonder that he n’adoun slit,
4 For doute lest he falle, he shoddreth and shereth.
When the frost freseth, muche chele he bit;
The thornes beth kene his hattren to-tereth.
Nis no wight in the world that wot when he sit,
8 Ne, bote hit be the hegge, what wedes he wereth.

Whider troweth this man ha the way take?
He hath set his o fot his other to-foren;
For non highte that he hath ne seeth me him ner shake,
12 He is the sloweste man that ever was y-boren.
Wher he were o the feld pichinge stake
For hope of his thornes to ditten his doren,
He mot mid his twi-bil other trous make,
16 Other al his dayes werk ther were y-loren.

This ilke man upon heigh when er he were,
Wher he were i the moone boorden and y-fed,
He leneth on his forke as a grey frere.
20 This crokedekaynard sore he is adred,
Hit is mony day go that he was here.
Ichot of his ernde he nath nought y-sped,
He hath hewe som wher a burthen of brere;
24 Therefore sum hayward hath taken his wed.

‘If thy wed ys y-take, bring hom the trous,
Sete forth thyn other fot, strid over sty.
We shule praye the hayward hom to our hous
28 And maken him at eise for the maystry;
Drinke to him deerly of ful good bous,
And oure dame douse shal sitten him by.
When that he is drunke as a dreynt mous,
32 Thenne we schule borwe the wed atte baily!’

This man hereth me nought though Ich to him crye;
Ichot the cherl is def, the del him to-drawe!
Though Ich yeiye upon heighe, nil he nought hye,
36 The lustless ladde can nought o lawe.
Hippe forth, Hubert, hosede pye!
Ichot th’art amarscled into the mawe.
Though me tene with him that my teeth mye,
40 Thecher nil nought adoun er the day dawe.
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 |
| 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 |
| That sweete bodi was y-tent, | pierced |
| 8 Prened with nayles three. | |
| 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 meyd 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.

Bewar, sqwyer, yeman and page,  squire servant
For servys is non heritage.  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
For servyse is non heritage.

10  Now thou art gret, tomorwen shal I, for your own prosperity steadily
    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, repay
    He shal us quiten our servyse give gifts worth
    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,
4    To devel Ich hem to-livre head by head (=one by one)
    and take to rolle! give as payment

The gadelinges were gadered lackeys gathered
    of Gonnylde gnoste;
Palfreyoures and pages grooms
    and boyes with boste,
Alle were y-haught arrogant boys
    of an horse thost;
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
To flees and to flye, them singled out
    to tyke and to tadde;
So saith romauntz, fleas flies
    as books say
12  Flee com of flour, mongrels toads
    and lous com of lad.
    whoso right radde:
    fleas came from flour
    louse came from lad
The harlotes ben horelinges
and haunten the plawe;
The gadelinges ben glotonous
and drinken er hit dawe;
Sathanas here syre
saide on his sawe:
Gobelyn made his garner
of gromene mawe.

The knave crammeth his crop
er the cok crawe;
He momeleth and moccheth
and marreth his mawe;
When he is al for-laped
and lad over lawe,
A dozeyne of dogges
e mighte hyre drawe.

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,
That he louseth a losynger
and shooeth a shrewe.

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;
They piken of here provendre
al here pride.

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,
Yet hem sholde arewen
of the arrerage!

While God was on erthe
and wandrede wide,
What was the resoun
why He nolde ride?
For He nolde no grom

attendants are fornicators
practise copulation
lackeys glutons
until it dawns
their sire
in his saying
Goblin (=a devil) granary
of a groom’s belly
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
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 (?)
stable-boys
shamefully clothed
adorn themselves with buttons
like girls
low-laced shoes
of heifer’s hide
filch from their fodder
all their finery
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
would not
groom
to go by His side,

36  Ne grucchyng of no gadeling
to chaule ne to chide.  nor the grumbling of any lackey
                           jabbering or quarrelling

Spedeth you to spewen,
    as me doth to spelle;
The fend you afrete
    with flesh and with felle!
Herkneth hiderward, horsmen,
a tidyng Ich you telle,
40  That ye shulen hangen
    and herberewen in helle.
    you will hang
    and lodge in hell

30. Where ben they before us were
    Duncan I 47, Brown I 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 bifoire us were,
Houndes ladde and hawkes bere,
And hadde feld and wode?
4  The riche ladies in here bour
    That wered gold in here tressour
    With here brighte rode?

They ete and dronke and made hem glad,
8  Here lif was al with gamen y-lad,
    Men kneled hem biforen;
    They beren hem wel swithe hye
    And in a twinkling of on eye
    Here soules were forloren.

Where is that laughing and that song,
That trailing and that proude gong,
The hawkes and the houndes;
16  All that joye is went away,
    That wele is comen to weilaway,
    To many harde stoundes.

Here paradis they nomen here,
20  And now they lye in helle y-ferre,
    The fire brenneth ever;
    Long is ‘ay!’ and long is ‘o!’,
    Long is ‘wy!’ and long is ‘wo!’ -

24  Thennes ne come they never.
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 bileeve thou nim that sheld,
44 The wiles thou art in that feld
     Thin hand to strengthen fonde;
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, hevene quene,
56 Thou might, and canst, and owest to ben
     Our sheld again the fend;
Help us sinne for to fleen,
That we mote Thy son y-seen
59 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,
Nayled to the harde tre.”

“Moder, do wey thi wepinge;
I thole this deth for mannes thinge -
For oven gilte thole I non.”

“Sone, I fele the dethe-stounde,
The swerd is at min herte-grunde,
That me by-highte Symeon.”

“Moder, rew upon thy beren!
Thow washe awery tho blodi teren
It don me worse than mi det.”

“Sone, how might I teres wernen?
I se tho blodi flodes ernen
Out of thin herte to min fet.”

“Moder, now I may thee seye,
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
No selly nis though me be wo.”

“Moder, if I dar thee telle,
Yif I ne dye thou gost to helle;
I thole this deth for thine sake.”

“Sone, thou beest me so minde,
Ne wit me nought; it is mi kinde
That I for thee this sorwe make.”

“Moder, merci! let me deyen,
For Adam owt of helle beyen,
And al mankin that is forloren.”

“Sone, what shal me to rede?
Thi pine pineth me to dede,
Let me deyen thee biforen.”

“Moder, now tarst thou might leren
What pine thole that children beren
What sorwe have that child forgon.”

“Sone, I wot, I can thee telle,
Bute it be the pine of helle
More sorwe ne wot I non.”

“Moder, rew of moder kare!
Now thou wost of moder fare,
Though thou be clene mayden-man.”

“Sone, help at alle niede,
Alle tho that to me grede,
Maiden, wif and fool womman.”
“Moder, I may no lenger dwelle,
The time is come I fare to helle,
The thridde day I rise upon.”

When He ros tho fel thi sorwe,
Thy blisse sprong the thridde morwe,
Beth the moder wer thou tho.

Blissed be thou quen of hevene,
Bring us out of helle levne
Thurgh thi dere sunes might.

When He ros tho fel thi sorwe,
Thy blisse sprong the thridde morwe,
Beth the moder wer thou tho.

Blissed be thou quen of hevene,
Bring us out of helle levne
Thurgh thi dere sunes might.

Thou be oure sheld ayaynoure fo.

Blissed be thou quen of hevene,
Bring us out of helle levne
Thurgh thi dere sunes might.

Thou be oure sheld ayaynoure fo.

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,
Modcr unwemmed and maiden clene,
Swich in world non other nis.
On thee hit is wel eth-sene
Of alle wommen thou havest the pris;
Mi swete Levedi, her mi bene,
And rew of me yif thi wille is.

Thou asteye so the day-rewere
That deleth from the derke night,
Of thee sprang a leme newe
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
And have merci of thin knight.

Spronge blosme of one rote,
The Holy Gost thee reste upon;
That was for monkinnes bote
And here soule t’alesen for on.
Ladi milde, softe and swote,
Ich crie thee merci, Ich am thy mon,
Bothe to honde and to fote,
On alle wise that Ich con.

Thou art erthe to gode sede,
On thee lighte th’eowene-dew,
Of thee sprang the edi blede,
The Holy Gost hire on thee sew.
Thou bring us out of care, of drede
That Eve bitterliche us brew,
Thou shalt us into hevene lede -

Wel swete is the ilke dew.

Moder ful of thewes hende,
Maide dreye and wel y-taught,
Ich am in thine love-bende,
And to thee is al mi draught.

And make me with thin sone y-saught.

And faire he gan hire grete:
“Hail be thou, ful of grace aright,
For Goddes sone, this hevene light,
For mannes love

Wil man bicome,
And take
Flesh of thee, maiden bright,
Mankin fre for to make

Of sinne and devles might.”

Gabriel, fram hevene king
Sent to the maide swete,
Broughte hire blisful tidings

And faire he gan hire grete:
“Hail be thou, ful of grace aright,
For Goddes sone, this hevene light,

Wil man bicome,
And take
Flesh of thee, maiden bright,
Mankin fre for to make

Of sinne and devles might.”

33. Gabriel, from hevene king

31. Gabriel, from hevene king

4        And faire he gan hire grete:
“Hail be thou, ful of grace aright,
For Goddes sone, this hevene light,

Wil man bicome,
And take
Flesh of thee, maiden bright,
Mankin fre for to make

Of sinne and devles might.”
Thurgh thy swete childinge, child-bearing
And out of pine y-brought.” torment

Whan the maiden understod
And th’angles wordes herde,
Mildeliche with milde mod mood
To th’angel she answerde:
“Our lordes thew-maiden i-wis
Ich am, that her-aboven is.
Anentes me
Ich am, that her-aboven is.
Handmaid indeed
Who is above
As regards
Since is is
Against the law of nature
Should have

Th’angel wente away mid than, at that
Al out of hire sighte;
Hire wombe arise gan
Thurgh th’Holi Gost enclosed forthwith
Enclosed with mercy fully endowed

In hire was Crist biloke anon, enclosed with mercy
Soth God, soth man in flesh and bon, true bone
And of hir fles flesh
Y-bore wes was born

At time.
in due time
Whereby good hope

Wherthrough us cam god won; whereby good hope
He bought us out of pine, allowed himself to be slain for us

Maiden-modere makeles,
Of milce ful y-bounde,
Bid for us Him that thee ches
Virgin-mother peerless
With mercy fully endowed
Pray for us to him that chose thee

At whom thou grace funde,
That He foryve us sinne and wrake,
And clene of evry gilt us make,
May forgive evil-doing
Guilt

And hevne blis,

Whan our time is
die
To sterve,
give
Us yive, for thine sake,
Here
Him so her for to serve

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 leman,  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, created
And love me wroughte,  created
Man, to be thi fere;  companion

4  Love me fedde,
And love me ledde, kept me here
And love me letted 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, noble
That is so fayr and fre, being
Sweetest of alle thynge, beings
His owne Ich owel wisse his own I ought indeed to be
15 Ful fer He me soughte, very far
Mid hard He me boughte suffering
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 myselfe stond stand
And mid herte y-see, with see
Y-thirled fet and honde pierced
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 - from pain
Wel oughte myn herte, smart
Al for His love smerte,
30 Syk and sory be.
sigh

A way! that I ne can alas
To Him turne al my thought, lover
And make Him my lemman redeemed
That thus me hath y-bought
35 With pine and sorwe longe, I am incapable
With woundes depe and stronge -
Of love ne can I nought! out of torment
His blod that fel to grounde
Out of His swete wounde,
40 Of pine us hath y-brought.

Jhesu, lemman softe, give
Thou yif me strengthe and might, yearning
Longinge sore and ofte
To serve thee aright;
45 And leve me pine drye, let me suffer pain
For thee, swete Marie, For love of thine childe,
Ernde us hevene light.

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

50

55

60

obtain for us heaven’s light

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

grant me soon to forsake

And mine sinnes bete,
That I have do thee wrong.
At mine lyves ende,
When I shal hennis wende,

atone for

whereby  have done

life’s end

hence go

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

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

kindly welcome

near

know

merry

A, will ye be wild?
By Mary myld

. . . . .

I trow ye will syng gay.

Bon jour...

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

everyone

examine  one

Let se who dare say nay -
Sir, what say ye?
Syng on, let us see.
Now will it be

Thys or another day?

Bon jour...

Loo, this is he that will do the deed!
He tempereth his mouth, therfore take heed.
Syng softe, I say, lest your nose bleed,

tunes  heed

redeemed

taut (=congested)

coughed

For hurt yourself ye may!
But by God that me bought,
Your brest is so tought,
Tyll ye have well cought

Ye may not therwith away.

Bon jour...
Sir, what say ye with your face so lene?
Ye syng nother good tenoure, treble, ne mene.
Utter not your voice without your brest be clene,
Hartely I you pray!
I hold you excused,
Ye shall be refused,
For ye have not be used
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,
Truly as I you say!
Hold up your hede,
Ye loke lyke lede;
Ye wast myche bred
Evermore from day to day.

Bon jour...

Now will ye see wher he stondith behynde?
Iwis, brother, ye be unkynd.
Stond forth, and wast with me som wynd,
For ye have ben called a synger ay.
Nay, be not ashamed;
Ye shall not be blamed,
For ye have ben famed
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;
He tokyn her fleyght and flowyn away,
With ego dixi, have good day.
Many whyte federes haght the pye -
I may noon mor syngyn, my lyppis arn so drye!
Manye whyte federis haght the swan -
The mor that I drynke, the lesse good I can!
Lay stykkyys on the fer, wyl mot it brenne,
Geve us onys drynkyn er we gon henne!

36  lean
36  mean (=middle voice)
36  unless
to
32  neither
to
28  unless
28  clean
28  with that
28  many birds sitting
28  they took their flight and flew
28  with that
28  has
28  no more
28  are
8  sticks on the fire
8  well may it burn
8  give once before hence
8  hence
40. Jolly Jankin
Duncan1 129, Robbins 27

MS Sloane 2593.

Kyrie, so kyrie
Jankin syngeth merie merrily
With aleyson.

1 As I went on Yol day in our prosessyon Yule (=Christmas)
Knew I joly Jankyn be his mery ton: by tone (=voice)

2 Jankin began the Offys on the Yol day, Introit [at beginning of Mass]
And yet me thynketh it dos me good, so merie gan he say it seems does did he say
Kyrieleysen.

3 Jankin red the Pistil ful fair and ful wel, read Epistle
And yet me thinketh it dos me good, as ever have I sel. I may have bliss
Kyrieleysen.

4 Jankin at the Sanctus craketh a meri divides (=sings with quick short notes)
eleison [punning with Alison]
and yet me thinketh it dos me good - I payed for his cote. coat
Kyrieleysen.

5 Jankin craketh notes an hundred on a knot, in a phrase
And yet he hakketh hem smaller than wortes to the pot. chops them herbs for
Kyrieleysen.

6 Jankin at the Agnus bereth the pax-brede, [disc of silver kissed during Mass]
He twynkeled, but sayd nought, and on myn foot he trede. winked nothing trod
Kyrieleysen.

7 Benedicamus domino, Crist fro schame me schilde. shield me from shame
Deo gracias therto - alas, I go with childe! as well
Kyrieleysen.

41. I have a yong suster
Duncan1 124

MS Sloane 2593

I have a yong suster sister
fer beyond the se, far sea
Many be the drueri keepsakes
that she sente me.

4 She sente me the cherye cherry
withouten any stone,
And so she did the dove
8 withouten any bone.

She sente me the brere briar
withouten any rinde,
She bad me love my lemman

12 withoute longing.

How sholde any cherye be withoute stone?
And how sholde any dove

16 ben withoute bone?

How sholde any brere ben withoute rinde?
How sholde I love my lemman

20 withoute longing?

When the cherye was a flour,
than hadde it non stone;
When the dove was an ey, egg

24 than hadde it non bone.

When the brere was onbred unbred (=not yet sprouted)
than hadde it non rinde;
When the mayde hath that she loveth what

28 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.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nou springeth the spray,} & \quad \text{sprouts the twig} \\
\text{Al for love Ich am so syk} & \quad \text{I am so sick} \\
\text{That slepen I ne may.} & \quad \text{must live forever}
\end{align*}
\]

As I me rode this endre dai
5 On mi playinge,
Seigh I where a litel may
Bigan to singe:
‘The clot him clinge!
Wo is him in love-longinge
10 Shal liven ay.’

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nou springeth, etc.} & \quad \text{as soon as}
\end{align*}
\]

Sone Ich herde that merye note,
Thider I drogh;
I found hire in an herbe swot,
15 Under a bogh,
With joie ynogh.
Sone I asked: ‘Thou merye mai,
Why singestou ay?’

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nou springeth, etc.} & \quad \text{do you sing always}
\end{align*}
\]

20 Than answerde that maiden swote
Mid wordes fewe:
‘Mi lemman me hath bihote
Of love trewe:
He changeth anewe.
25 If I mai, it shal him rewe,
By this day.’

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Nou springeth, etc.} & \quad \text{sweet}
\end{align*}
\]
2. Lullay, lullay, litel child
Duncan 1 50

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

Lullay, lullay, litel child
why wepestou so sore?  weepest thou bitterly
Nedes mostou wepe  of necessity must you weep
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,
whil they alives wore.
Lullay, lullay, litel child,
child, lullay, lullow,
Into uncouth world
unknown
y-commen so artou.

Bestes and tho foules,
the fishes in the flode,
And ech shaft alives,
maked of bone and blode,
Whan they commen to the world,
they don hemself some gode,
Alle but the wrecche brol
that is of Adames blode.
Lullay, lullay, litel child,
to care artou bemette;
Thou nost nought this worldes wilde
know not that power
before thee is y-sette.

Child, if it betideth
that thou shalt thrive and thee,
Think thou were y-fostred
happens
up thy moder knee;
Ever have mind in thin hert
of tho thinges thre,
Whan thou commest, what thou art,
and what shall come of thee.
Lullay, lullay, litel child,
child, lullay, lullay
With sorwe thou com into this world,
came
with sorwe shalt wend away.

Ne tristou to this world,
it is thy fulle foe;
The rich he maketh pouer,
the pouer rich also;
It turneth wo to wel,
and eke wel to wo;
Ne trist non man to this world
do not trust in
declared enemy
he=world poor
likewise
misery to prosperity
also
let no man trust in
44 while it turneth so.
Lullay, lullay, litel child,
thy fote is in the whele;
Thou dost whider it wil turne,
to wo other to wele.

Child, thou art a pilgrim
in wikkednes y-born;
Thou wandrest in this false world,
thou loke thee beforne!
Deth shal comen with a blast
out of a well dim horn,
Adames kin adoun to cast -
himself hath don beforne.
Lullay, lullay, light child,
so wo thee worth Adam,
In the lond of paradis,
through wikkednes of Satan.

Child, thou n’art a pilgrim
but an uncouth gest;
Thy dawes ben y-told,
thy journeys ben y-cest;
Whider thou shalt wend,
by north other by est,
Deth thee shall betide
with bitter bale in brest.
Lullay, lullay, light child,
this wo Adam thee wrought,
Whan he of the appil ete
and Eve it him betought.

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
   put her child to sleep
   Hire child o slepe bringe;
   The child thoughte she did him wrong
   And bad his moder singe.
3 “Sing now, moder,” seide that child,
   “What me shal befalle
Hereafter whan I cum to eld;
   So don modres alle.

4 “Each a moder, trewly,
   That can hire cradel kepe
Is won to lulle lovely
   And singen hire child o slepe.

5 “Swete moder, fair and fre,
   Sithen that it is so,
I preye thee that thou lulle me
   And sing sumwhat therto.”

6 “Swete sone,” seyde she,
   “Wheroffe shulde I singe?
Wist I nevere yet more of thee
   But Gabrieles gretinge.

7 “He grette me godly on his kne
   And seide, ‘Heil, Marie,
Ful of grace, God is with thee;
   Beren thou shalt Messye.’

8 “I wondrede michil in my thought,
   For man wold I right none,
‘Marie,’ he seide, ‘drede thee nought;
   Let God of hevene alone.

9 “ ‘The Holy Ghost shal don al this,’
   He seyde, withouten wone,
That I shulde beren mannis blis,
   Thee, my swete sone.

10 “He seide, ‘Thou shalt beren a king
   In Kinge Davidis see;
In al Jacobs woniing
   Ther king shuld he be.’

11 “He seyde that Elizabeth,
   That baraine was before,
A child conceyved hath,
   ‘To me leve thou the more.’

12 “I answerede blithely,
   For his word me payede,
‘Lo, Godis servant her am I;
   Be it as thou me seyde.’
13 “Ther, als he seide, I thee bare,  
   bore  
   On midwinter night,  
   In maydenhed withouten care,  
   pain  
   By grace of God Almight.

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,  
   glad  
   No more can I say,  
   to your liking  
   And, If I coude, fayn wold I  
   To don al at thy pay.”

16 “Moder,” seide that swete thing,  
   teach  
   “To singen I shal thee lere  
   happens  
   What me fallet to suffring  
   And don whil I am here.

17 “Whanne the seven days ben don,  
   (circumcised)  
   Right as Abraham was,  
   very  
   Cut shal I ben with a ston  
   In a wol tendre place.

18 “Whanne the twelve days ben do,  
   star  
   By leding of a sterre  
   shall then  
   Three kinges me shul seke tho  
   With gold, insens, and mirre.

19 “The forty day, to fill the lawe,  
   go together  
   We shulen to temple y-fere;  
   Ther Simeon shal thee sey a sawe  
   state of mind  
   That changen shal thy chere.

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  
   always be  
   I shal nevere from thee swerve,  
   But ay, moder, ben at thin heste,  
   Joseph and thee to serve.

22 “Whan the thretty yer ben spent,  
   must accomplish  
   I mot beginne to fille  
   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,
The same wise that was Adam,
But I shal betre withstonde.

25  “Disciples I shal gadere
And senden hem for to preche,
The lawes of my Fader
In al this werld to teche.

26  “I shal ben so simple,
And to men so conning,
That most partize of the puple
Shal wiln maken me king.”

27  “Swete sone,” than seyde she,
“No sorwe shulde me dere
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
That man was inne brought.

29  “Therefore whan two and thretty yer ben do,
And a litel more,
Moder, thou shalt maken michil mon
And seen me deye sore.

30  “The sharpe swerd of Simeon
Perse shal thin herte;
For my care of michil won
Sore thee shal smerte.

31  “Shamfully for I shal deye,
Hangende on the rode;
For mannis ransoum shal I paye
Myn owen herte blode.”

32  “Alas, sone,” seyde that may,
“Sithen that it is so,
Whorto shal I biden that day
to beren thee to this wo?”

33  “Moder,” he seide, “taket lighte,
For liven I shal ageyne,
And in thy kinde thoru my might
   For elles I wroughte in veyne.

34  “To my Fader I shal wende
   In myn manhede to hevene;
The Holy Ghost I shal thee sende
   With his sondes seine.

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.

36  “Al this werld demen I shal
   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
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.
Lulley, lulley; etc.

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

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

10 By that bedes side ther kneleth a may,
And she wepeth both nyght and day.
Lyrics carols ballads  gb 2001

*Lulley, lulley; etc.*

And by that beddes side ther stondeth a ston,
Corpus Christi’ wretren ther-on.

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.*

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._

_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._

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._

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._

Queso iam the Trynity:  
‘Duc me from this vanité

25 *In celum, ther is joy with the’ -  
*Terribilis mors conturbat me._

_Alas, my hart etc._
6. Blowyng was mad for gret game
Duncan 2 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.

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

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

Whatsoever be in thi thought,
Hear and see, and say nothing
Her and se, and sey ryght nought;
Taught
15 Than schall men sey thi art wel tought
To ber a horne and blow it nought.
I hold hym wyse etc.

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

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

And when thou syttest at the ale,
Sing like
And cryest lyk a nyghttyngale,

Bewar to whom thou tellest thi tale,
30 But ber a horne and blow it nought.
I hold hym wyse etc.

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  
Oh, there he met three jolly jerdins  
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. Musical 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 bloudy 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,  
   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.  
    Syck, sike, and to-towe sike,  
    And sike and like to die;  
    The sikest nighte that ever I abode,  
    God lord have mercy on me!

2  “Haille, master, and wether you will,  
    And wether ye like it best;”  
    “To the Castle of Crecynbroghe,  
    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,  
    She loked upp and downe;  
    There was she ware of an host of men,  
    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.”

6  She thought he had ben her wed lord,  
    As he comd riding home;  
    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  
    Wer lighte aboute the place.

8  “Give over thi howse, thou lady gay,  
    And I will make the a bande;  
    To-nighte thou shall ly within my armes,
To-morrow thou shall ere my lande.”

9 Then bespacke the eldest sonne,
That was both whitt and redde:
O mother dere, geve over your howse,
Or elles we shall be 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,
And charge me my gonne,
That I may shott at yonder bloddy butcher,
The lord of Ester-towne.”

12 Styfly upon her wall she stoode,
And lett the pellets flee;
But then she myst the blody bucher,
And she slew other three.

13 “[I will] not geve over my hous.” she saithe,
“Neither for lord nor loune;
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.”

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.”

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.”
19 Then bespake the yongest sonne,
    That sat on the nurses knee,
Sayth, Mother gay, geve over your house;
    It smoldereth me.

20 “I wold geve my gold,” she saith,
    “And so I wolde my ffee,
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,
    The fire fell aboute her head;
She toke up her children thre,
    Seth, Babes, we are all dead.

23 Then bespake the hye steward,
    That is of hye degree;
Saith, Ladie gay, you are in close,
    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.

25 “Busk and bowne, my mery men all,
    Even and go ye with me;
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 knighte;
And when he saw his hall burning,
    His harte was no dele lighte.

27 He sett a trumpett till his mouth,
    He blew as it plesd his grace;
Twenty score of Hamlentons
    Was light about the place.

28 “Had I knowne as much yesternighte
    As I do to-daye,
Captaine Care and all his men
    Should not have gone so quite.
29  “Fye upon the, Captaine Care,
    And all thy blody 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 clay-cold lips,
    Your time will not be long.”

6  “ ’T is down in yonder garden green
Love, where we used to walk,
The fainest flower that ever was seen
    Is withered to a stalk.”
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,  
   A week but barely one,  
   Whan word came to the carline wife,  
   That her three sons were gane.

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,  
   Till my three sons come hame to me,  
   In earthly flesh and blood.”

5 It fell about the Martinmass,  
   When nights are long and mirk,  
   The carlin wife’s three sons came hame,  
   And their hats were o the birk.

6 It neither grew in syke nor ditch,  
   Nor yet in ony sheugh;  
   But at the gates o Paradise,  
   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,  
   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.

11  The cock doth craw, the day doth daw,
    The channerin worm doth chide;
Gin we be mist out o our place,
    A sair pain we maun bide.

12  “Fare ye weel, my mother dear!
    Fareweel to barn and byre!
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;
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?”
"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.

"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.

"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."

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?

"Or do you weep for some other young man
   That you love much better that me?"
   "No, I do weep for my little son,
   That should have come along with me."

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.

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.

"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).
1   Clark Sanders and May Margret
    Walkt ower yon graveld green,
    And sad and heavy was the love,
    I wat, it fell this twa between.      gravelly grass
    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;
    They’ll say, We hae but ae sister,
    And here her lying wi a knight.”
    all
    have one
    with

4   “Ye’ll take the sourde fray my scabbord,
    And lowly, lowly lift the gin,
    And you may say, your oth to save,
    You never let Clark Sanders in.
    sword from scabbard
    quietly doorlatch
    oath

5   Yele take a napken in your hand,
    And ye’l ty up baith your een,
    An ye may say, your oth to save,
    That ye saw na Sandy sen late yestreen.
    you’ll neckerchief
    both eyes
    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,
    And lowly, lowly lifted the gin,
    She was to swear, her oth to save,
    She never let Clerk Sanders in.
    taken

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;
    She was to swear, her oth to save,
    He never in her bower-floor tread.
    inside

10  In and came her seven brothers,
    (and pleonastic)
    And all their torches burning bright;
    Says thay, We hae but ae sister,
    And see there her lying wi a knight.
    have one
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.”

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.”

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

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

Out he has taen a bright long brand,
   And he has striped it throw the straw,
   And throw and throw Clarke Sanders’ body
   A wat he has gard cold iron gae.

Sanders he started, an Margret she lapt,
   Intill his arms whare she lay,
   And well and wellsom was the night,
   A wat it was between these twa.

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

They lay still, and sleeped sound,
   Untill the sun began to shine;
   She lookt between her and the wa,
   And dull and heavy was his eeen.

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.

“O Sanders, I’le do for your sake
   What other ladys would na thoule;
   When seven years is come an gone,
   There’s near a shoe go on my sole.

“O Sanders, I’le do for your sake
22 “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

23 The bells gaed clinking throw the towne,
To carry the dead corps to the clay,
went
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 toung, 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
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,
many
With mony a sad sigh and groan.

2 “Are ye sleeping, Margret,” he says,
“Or are ye waking, presentlie?”

Give me my faith and trouthe again,
I know (= indeed) gave
A wat, trew-love, I gied to thee.”

3 “Your faith and trouthe ye’s never get,
Nor our trew love shall never twain,
you’ll
Till ye come with me in my bower,
part
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.”

6  “Thy faith and trouth thou shall na get,
    Nor our trew love shall never twin,
    Till ye teell me what comes of women
    Awat that dy’s in strong traveling.”

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

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.”

9  Up she has tain a bright long wand,
    And she has straked her trouthe thereon;
    She has given [it] him out at the shot-window,
    Wi many a sad sigh and heavy groan.

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.”

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.

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.”

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.

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.

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 earthly nurse
   And aye she sings, Ba, lily wean! always hush, lovely child
   Little ken I my bairnis father, know child’s
   Far less the land that he staps in. resides

2 Then ane arose at her bed-fit, one
   An a grumly guest I’m sure was he: and fierce-looking
   “Here am I, thy bairnis father,
   Although that I be not comelie.”

3 “I am a man, upon the lan, land
   An I am a silkie in the sea; seal
   And when I’m far and far frae lan, from
   My dwelling is in Sule Skerrie.”

4 “It was na weel,” quo the maiden fair, not well said
   “It was na weel, indeed,” quo she,
   “That the Great Silkie from Sule Skerrie should have come and aught a bairn to me.”

5 Now he has taen a purse of goud, taken gold
   And he has pat it upon her knee, put upon
   Sayin, Gie to me my little young son, give
   An tak thee up thy nouris-fee.

6 An it sall come to pass on a simmer’s day, shall summer
   When the sin shines het on evera stane, sun hot stone
   That I will tak my little young son,
   An teach him for to swim the faem. foam

7 An thu sall marry a proud gunner,
   An a proud gunner I’m sure he’ll be, ever
   An the very first schot that ere he schoots, both
   He’ll schoot baith my young son and me.
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:
“O whar will I get guid sailor,
To sail this schip of mine?”

2
Up and spak an eldern knicht,
Sat at the kings richt kne:
“Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor
That sails upon the se.”

3
The king has written a braid letter,
And signd it wi his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand.

4
The first line that Sir Patrick red,
A loud lauch lauched he;
The nexst l
ine that Sir Patrick red,
The teir blinded his ee.

5
“O wha is this has don this deid,
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,
Wi the auld moone in hir arme,
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme.”

8
O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
To weet their cork-heiled schoone;
Bot lang owre a’ the play wer playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone.

9
O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence
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.

Child 58H is from Scott’s Minstrelsy 1803.

1 The king sits in Dumfermline town, skilful
Drinking the blude-red wine: O
“O whare will I get a skeely skipper,
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 sailed 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;
The king’s daughter of Noroway,
‘T is thou maun bring her hame.”

5 The first word that Sir Patrick read,
Sae loud, loud laughed he;
The neist word that Sir Patrick read,
The tear blinded his ee.

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.”

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!”
“Ye lie, ye lie, ye liars loud.
    very loud
  Fu loud I hear ye lie!”

11 “For I brought as much white monie
    silver
  As gane my men and me,
  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’,
    alack
  Our gude ship sails the morn:”
“Now, ever alake! my master dear,
    yesternight
  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,
    such
  I fear we’ll come to harm.”

14 They hadna sailed a league, a league,
    sky
  A league but barely three,
  When the lift grew dark, and the wind blew loud
    grim
  And gurlly grew the sea.

15 The ankers brak, and the topmasts lap,
    sprang
  It was sic a deadly storm,
  And the waves came oer the broken ship,
    such
  Till a’ her sides were torn.

16 “O where will I get a gude sailor,
    bolt
  To take my helm in hand,
  Till I get up to the tall topmast,
    cloth
  To see if I can spy land?”

17 “O here am I, a sailor gude,
    bolt
  To take the helm in hand,
  Till you go up to the tall topmast;
    cloth
  But I fear you’ll neer spy land.”

18 He hadna gane a step, a step,
    bolt
  A step but barely ane,
  When a bout flew out of our goodly ship,
    cloth
  And the salt sea it came in.

19 “Gae fetch a web o the silken claith,
Another o the twine,  
And wap them into our ship’s side,  
And let na the sea come in.”

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.

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.

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.

23  The ladies 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 ladies 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.

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.

2  “O pay me, Lord Wearie,
come, pay me my fee:"
“I canna pay you, Lamkin,
for I maun gang oer the sea.”

3 “O pay me now, Lord Wearie,
come, pay me out o hand:”
“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.”

5 Lord Wearie got a bonnie ship,
to sail the saut sea faem;
Bade his lady weel the castle keep,
ay till he should come hame.

6 But the nourice was a fause limmer
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,
Loot him in at a little shot-window
and brought him to the ha.

8 “Oh whare’s a’ the men o this house,
that ca me Lamkin?”
“They’re at the barn-well thrashing;
’t will be lang ere they come in.”

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?”
“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,
And he has gien the bonny babe
    a deep wound and a sair.

13 Then Lamkin he rocked,
    and the fause nourice sang,
    Till frae ilkae bore o the cradle
    the red blood out sprang.

14 Then out it spak the lady,
    as she stood on the stair:
    “What ails my bairn, nourice,
    that he’s greeting sae sair.

15 “O still my bairn, nourice,
    O still him wi the pap!”
    “He winna still, lady,
    for this nor for that.”

16 “O still my bairn, nourice,
    O still him wi the wand!”
    “He winna still, lady,
    for a’ his father’s land.”

17 “O still my bairn, nourice,
    O still him wi the bell!”
    “He winna still, lady,
    till ye come down yoursel.”

18 O the firsten step she steppit
    she steppit on a stane;
    But the neisten step she steppit
    she met him Lamkin.

19 “O mercy, mercy, Lamkin,
    hae mercy upon me!
    Though you’ve taen my young son’s life,
    ye may let mysel be.”

20 “O sall I kill her, nourice,
    or sall I lat her be?”
    “O kill her, kill her, Lamkin
    for she neer was good to me.”

21 “O scour the basin, nourice,
    and mak it fair and clean,
    For to keep this lady’s heart’s blood,
    for she’s come o noble kin.”

22 “There need nae basin, Lamkin,
    lat it run through the floor;
    What better is the heart’s blood
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?"
    "It is your lady’s heart’s blood;
    ‘t is as clear as the lamer."

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."

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 me 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 Edenburough 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 soveraine 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 mettle 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,
And so besett poore Ionne rounde,
That fowrescore and tenn of Ionne’s best men
Lay gasping all upon the ground.

15 Then like a mad man Ionne laid about,
And like a mad man then fought hee,
Until a falce Scot came Ionne behinde,
And runn him through the faire boddee.

16 Saying, Fight on, my merry men all,
And see that none of you be taine;
And I will stand by and bleed but awhile,
And then will I come and fight againe.

17 Newes then was brought to young Ionne Armstrong,
As he stood by his nurse’s knee,
Who vowed if ere he lived for to be a man,
O the treacherous Scots revengd hee’d be.

11. Mary Hamilton
Child 173A

This ballad of infanticide is set
in the court of Mary Stuart of Scotland (1542-67): Mary Hamilton is one of
the four Maries attending the queen, and the seducer is the queen’s husband, Lord Darnly (married 1565).
Child dates it between 1719 and 1764: “It is remarkable that one of the very latest of the Scottish popular
ballads should be one of the very best.”

1 Word’s gane to the kitchen,
   gone
   And word’s gane to the ha,
   hall
   That Marie Hamilton gangs wi bairn
   with child
   To the highest Stewart of a’.
   highest all

2 He’s courted her in the kitchen,
He’s courted her in the ha,
He’s courted her in the laigh cellar,
   low
   And that was warst of a’.

3 She’s tyed it in her apron
   And she’s thrown it in the sea;
Says, Sink ye, swim ye, bonny wee babe!
   You’ll never get mair of me. 
   more

4 Down then cam the auld queen,
   old
   Goud tassels tying her hair:
   gold
   “O Marie, where’s the bonny wee babe
   cry so sorely
   That I heard greet sae sair?”

5 “There never was a babe intill my room,
   is intended
   As little designs to be;
   It was but a touch o my sair side,
Come oer my fair bodie.”

“O Marie, put on your robes o black,
Or else your robes of brown,
For ye maun gang wi me the night,
To see fair Edinbro town.”

“I winna put on my robes o black,
Nor yet my robes o brown;
But I’ll put on my robes o white,
To shine through Edinbro town.”

When she gaed up the Cannogate,
She laugh’d loud laughers three;
But whan she cam down the Cannogate
The tear blinded her ee.

When she gaed up the Parliament stair,
The heel cam off her shee;
And lang or she cam down again
She was condemned to dee.

“Ye need nae weep for me,” she says,
“For had I not slain mine own sweet babe,
This death I wadna dee.

“Bring me a bottle of wine,” she says,
“That I may drink to my weil-wishers,
And they may drink to me.

“Here’s a health to the jolly sailors,
That sail upon the main;
Let them never let on to my father and mother
But what I’m coming hame.

“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.

“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’ll be but three;
There was Marie Seton, and Marie Beton,
And Marie Carmichael, and me.”

12. Inter diabolus et virgo


1 Wol ye here a wonder thynge 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, if compact
Hyf thou wolt be true and forward holde.

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? louder
What ys loder than is the horne?

7 What is longger an ys the way? than
What ys radder 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? richer (=powerful)
What ys recher an ys the kynge?
11 “What ys yelwer an ys the wex?
What ys softer an ys the flex?”

12 “But thou now answer me,
Thu schalt for sothe my leman be.”

13 “Ihesu, for thy myld mygth,
As thu art art kynge and knygt,

14 “Lene me wisdome to answere here ryght
And schylde me fram the foule wyght.

15 “Hewene ys heyer than ys the tre;
Helle ys dypper than ys the see.

16 “Hongyr ys scharpper than the thorne;
Thonder ys lodder than ys the horne.

17 “Loukynge ys longer than ys the way;
Syn ys rader than ys the day.

18 “Godys flesse ys betur than ys the brede;
Payne ys strenger than ys the dede.

19 “Gras ys grenner than ys the wode;
Love ys swetter than ys the notte.

20 Thowt ys swifter than ys the wynde;
Ihesus ys recher than ys the kynge.

21 “Safer us yelwer than ys the wex;
Selke ys softer than ys the flex.

22 “Now, thu fende, styl thu be;
Nelle ich speke no more with the!”

13. Riddles wisely expounded
Child 1A, C

Child 1A is from a 17th century broadside.

1 There was a lady of the North Country,
   Lay the bent to the bonny broom
   And she had lovely daughters three.
   Fa la la la, fa la la la ra re

2 There was a knight of noble worth
   Which also lived in the North.
The knight, of courage stout and brave,
A wife he did desire to have.

He knocked at the ladie’s gate
One evening when it was late.

The eldest sister let him in,
And pin’d the door with a silver pin.

The second sister she made his bed,
And laid soft pillows under his head.

The youngest daughter that same night,
She went to bed to this young knight.

And in the morning, when it was day,
These words unto him she did say:

‘Now you have had your will,’ quoth she,
‘I pray, sir knight, will you marry me?’

The young brave knight to her replyed,
‘Thy suit, fair maid, shall not be deny’d.

‘If thou canst answer me questions three,
This very day will I marry thee,’

‘Kind sir, in love, O then,’ quoth she,
‘Tell me what your three questions be.’

‘O what is longer than the way,
Or what is deeper than the sea?

‘Or what is louder than the horn?
Or what us sharper than a thorn?

‘Or what is greener than the grass,
Or what is worse then a woman was?’

‘O love is longer than the way,
And hell is deeper than the sea.

‘And thunder is louder than the horn,
And hunger is sharper than a thorn.

‘And poyson is greener than the grass,
And the Devil is worse than woman was.’

When she these questions answered had,
The knight became exceeding glad.
And having truly try’d her wit,
He much commended her for it.

And after, as it is verifi’d,
He made of her his lovely bride.

So now, fair maidens all, adieu,
This song I dedicate to you.

I wish that you may constant prove
Unto the man that you do love.

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

There was a knicht riding frae the east,
   Sing the Cather banks, the bonnie brume
Wha had been wooing at monie a place.
   And ye may beguile a young thing sune

He came unto a widow’s door,
   knight   from
And speird whare her three dochters were.
   inquired   daughters

The auldest ane’s to a washing gane,
   oldest one   gone
The second’s to a baking gane.

The youngest ane’s to a wedding gane,
   night before   home
And it will be nicht or she be hame.

He sat him doun upon a stane,
   stone
Till thir three lasses came tripping hame.

The auldest ane’s to the bed making,
   bold and bright
And the second ane’s to the sheet spreading.
   strange

The youngest ane was bauld and bricht,
   And she was to lye with this unco knicht.

‘Gin ye will answer me questions ten,
   if
The morn ye sall be made may ain.
   shall   own

‘O what is heigher nor the tree?
   than
And what is deeper nor the sea?

‘Or what is heavier nor the lead?
   bread
And what is better nor the breid?

‘O what is whiter nor the milk?
   softer
Or what is safter nor the silk?

‘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,
    And the down is safter nor the silk.
    snow

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,
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 blaws his horn both lowd and shril.
    The wind hath blown my plaid awa
    blows

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,
    Yea, and the knight in my armes two.’
    chest

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,
    ‘Married with me thou il wouldst be.’
    too
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,
   Without any cut or heme,’ quoth he.

9 ‘Thou must shape it knife-and-sheerlesse,
   Without knife or scissors,
   And also sue it needle-threedlesse.’

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,
    Which lyeth low by yon sea-strand.

12 ‘For thou must eare it with thy horn,
    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,
    And also seek it in thy glove.

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,
    Then come to me and get thy sark then.’

18 ‘I’ll not quite my plaid for my life;
    Its haps my seven bairns and my wife.’
    The wind shall not blow my plaid awa

19 ‘May maidenhead I’ll 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
‘Remember me to a lass who lives there;
For once she was a true lover of mine.

2 ‘And tell her to make me a cambric shirt,
   Without a needle or thread or ought else;
   And then she shall be a true lover of mine.

3 ‘And tell her to wash it in yonder well,
   Where water neer sprung nor a drop of rain fell;
   And then, etc.

4 ‘And tell her to hang it on yonder stone,
   Where moss never grew since Adam was born.

5 ‘And when she has finished and done, her I’ll repay,
   She can come unto me and married we’ll be.’

6 ‘Oh where are you going?’ ‘To Scarbro fair.’
   ‘Remember me to a lad who lives there;
   For once he was a true lover of mine.

7 ‘And tell him to buy me an acre of land
   Between the wide ocean and the sea-sand;
   And then he, etc.

8 ‘And tell him to plough it with a ram’s horn,
   And sow it all over with one pepper-corn.

9 ‘And tell him to reap ‘t with a sickle of leather,
   And bind it up with a peacock’s feather.

10 ‘And when he has finished, and done his work,
    He can come unto me for his cambric shirt.’

15. The Fause Knight upon the Road
    Child 3

From Motherwell’s Minstrelsy, Ancient and Modern, 1827.

1 ‘O whare are ye gaun?’
   Quo the fause knicht upon the road: quoth false knight (=devil)
   ‘I’m gaun to the scule,’
   Quo the wee boy, and still he stude. little stood

2 ‘What is that ye’ve upon your back?’ quo etc.
   ‘Atweel it is my bukes,’ quo etc. certainly

3 ‘What’s that ye’ve got in your arm?’
   ‘Atweel it is my peit.’ peat (for the schoolroom fire)
4 ‘Wha’s aucht they sheep?’
   ‘They are mine and my mither’s.’
   whose are these sheep
   mother’s

5 ‘How monie o them are mine?’
   ‘A’ they that hae blue tails.’
   many
   have

6 ‘I wiss ye were on yon tree:’
   ‘And a gude ladder under me.’
   wish

7 ‘And the ladder for to break:’
   ‘And you for to fa down.’
   fall

8 ‘I wiss ye were in yon sie:’
   ‘And a gude bottom under me.’
   sea

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,
   Till ance my dear father and mother I see.’
   have once

9 ‘Seven king’s-daughters here hae I slain,
And ye shall be the eight o them.’

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, Wi his ain dag-durk sae sair as she dang him.

13 ‘If seven king’s-daughters here ye hae slain, Lye ye here, a husband to them a’.’


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.’