



sing yonder

vol. 6

simple contemporary settings for songs 51-60 in the Roud Index

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introduction

Hello again from an excessively wet Derbyshire. I have another ten fascinating songs for you: a couple of absolute monsters of the oeuvre, ubiquitous not just in folk but in music in general, and a smattering of very rarely performed ones, that in my opinion deserve equally to see the light of day. It's 90% Child ballad, but 100% interesting.

This volume marks about a year since I published volume one, which means I have hit my target of 5-6 volumes per year. I'm not sure how it's going to go over the next twelve months, as I have a few other distractions elsewhere, in both life and the Sing Yonder universe. I am also enjoying writing for my mailing list*, where I can be unconstrainedly verbose, share hundreds of songs, and find all manner of other interesting images, texts and ideas surrounding the ballads and the people who sang them, and those who found them being sung. It's too early to tell whether this uninhibited indulgence will speed things up or slow things down. Probably the latter, as I am allowing myself to venture down all sorts of tangential cul-de-sacs, including, to date, diverse topics such as the historical development of the doorbell, the folkloric implications of a patch of infertile ground, and Percy Grainger's trousers.

On Boxing Day 2022, the great writer and documentarian of human impulses Hanif Kureishi suffered a terrible health crisis that left him paralysed in an Italian hospital bed. There he found himself with time to ponder life, and he, with help from his family, has been sharing these thoughts with us in his newsletter. As a creative person, and also someone who deals with the physical limitations of a close family member on a daily basis, many of his thoughts struck deep chords in me. Once, very soon after the accident, he wrote: "In my experience, all art and all artists are collaborationists. If you are not collaborating with a particular individual, you are of course collaborating with the history of that medium, and you're also collaborating with the time, politics, and culture within which you exist. There are no individuals."

I've met Hanif a few times, and had some memorable nights out on the town with him in that relatively carefree interlude known as the 1990s. He is one of those people who, when you are talking to them, it feels as though they are looking into your very soul. That's the great writer's instinct, of course, to listen, absorb and try to understand our motivations. Now, with nowhere to look other than inside himself, he has captured the collective journey we are all on. Thank you all, my collaborators, for joining me. And let's wish Hanif and his family all the strength and love for the fullest possible recovery.

Karl Sinfield, February 2023.

* Thanks for asking. It can be found online at singyonder.substack.com. Basic subscription is free, but there are valuable benefits if you pay a small monthly subscription - not least a UK subscription to these printed books.

a note on the settings

My process to arrive at each arrangement was first to listen to every version I could find, although in some cases such as Rouds 22 and 24 these were thin on the ground. However, generally this is much easier these days thanks to streaming platforms*, and I found I had at least thirty versions of each song at my fingertips. There might be the basis of something in there I can use, or at least over the course of a few listens, something might work almost untouched, something might need a bit of tweaking to fit, or if nothing else, just the general feeling of the song will lead me to a new version.

Of course, a huge help in the listening odyssey I have been on is the tireless work of Reinhard Zierke and his Mainly Norfolk site, which provides a great resource for finding tunes when the names vary (I have listed most of the alternative names underneath each song title to save you some time if you want to search for them yourself), and the site also includes a plethora of illuminating sleeve notes.

I have also suggested a few tracks for further listening. These might be related to the setting in some way, or a contrast, or just something I think is interesting. I have tried to straddle both new and old sources. But do go out and find your own favourites, they are all good, even the bad ones.

Finally, this project has also hugely increased my knowledge and appreciation of these old stories (which is the main reason I started in the first place), and those singers that have carried them for us all for generations. I have included a list of some of the sources (there are lots more in earlier volumes if you want a fuller reading list) that have helped me on this journey at the end of the book.

recordings

This book is aimed at people with basic skills, so I have made some very rough homemade "guide recordings" to accompany this book, and these can be found, along with the book in PDF format, at the website singyonder.co.uk. DISCLAIMER: It should be apparent that I'm no great singer, and my guitar skills are conspicuously average. Thus, I am the perfect test bed for these simple tunes - if I can play them, anyone can. And if I can play them in a way that's vaguely tolerable, I'm sure you will make them sound amazing.

I have used simple open chords for each setting in this book (plus alternates are given), to make everything playable for people of all skill levels. Where I have used a capo in the recording to make the song work for my vocal range, or to give easier access to embellishments, that will be noted on the song page.

* My current favourite platform is Bandcamp, it is currently the fairest way to support musicians, and many traditional folk artists, especially the younger ones, are represented there.

ROUD 51

The Unquiet Grave

AKA: Cold Blows the Wind, The Broken-Hearted Lover

Summary:

A widow(er)* grieves for their spouse, crying over their grave. The ghost entreats their weeping lover to please cease their mourning, as it's interrupting their eternal rest.

Setting notes:

A simple and powerful** idea that, while reflecting a widespread and ancient belief*** across many cultures, is apparently a relatively recent entrant into the ballad sphere, appearing as it did fully formed in the second half of the 19th century****. Its universality and simple structure has lead to a diverse number of tunes being applied to mostly similar collections of words (the most common being the seven verses sung in Sussex by an unnamed girl in 1868). It's quite commonly sung to the tune recognisable to most people as The Star of the County Down, which in turn takes its tune from an older English carol, Dives and Lazarus. There are a great proliferation of versions of this setting to enjoy, but I think the melodramatic nature of it most suits a highly skilled singer. For the rest of us, the version published here is learned from the recent recording of the great Anglo-American duo Cath and Phil Tyler - the tune is taken from The Finest Flower, a US hymn from the Sacred Harp collection from the mid 19th century credited to David Walker. The words were adapted to fit by contemporary scholar and passionate advocate of Sacred Harp singing, Michael Walker.

Suggested further listening:

"Cold Blows the Wind", May Bradley, *Sweet Swansea*

"Cold Blows the Wind", George Dunn, *Chainmaker*

"Finest Flower", Cath & Phil Tyler, *The Ox and he Ax*

"Unquiet Grave", Ari & Mia, *Sew the City*

"The Unquiet Grave", *The Furrow Collective, BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards 2016*

* The fact that it is easily adaptable to any gender has probably played a part in this ballad's popularity.

** The emotion is heightened by the inclement weather conditions that always seem to prevail during grief, not just in folk song but also many Oscar®-winning films.

*** As with Sweet William's Ghost (Roud 50) there is extensive discussion of this ballad to be found in Lowry C. Wimberley's 1928 book "Folklore in the English & Scottish Ballads".

**** Tune collector Bertrand Bronson excitedly tries to associate the song with a 14th century carol, mainly by virtue of it mentioning cold wind and rain (as if that were a rare occurrence in the UK). I, and most other concerned parties, remain unconvinced, although it's more convincing than a hearsay account from a 19th century US source that the ballad is derived from the castration and subsequent death of William Shakespeare.

ROUD 51: THE UNQUIET GRAVE

G D
 The wind it blows today my love
 C G
 And a few small drops of rain
 D
 I never had but one true love
 C G
 And she in the grave is lain
 D Em
 I'll do as much for my true love
 G D
 As any young man may
 C Em G C
 I'll sit and mourn all on her grave
 G
 For twelve months and a day

 The twelve months and a day being done
 The dead began to speak
 O who sits weeping on my grave
 And will not let me sleep
 'Tis I your love sits on your grave
 And I will not let you sleep
 For I crave one kiss from your clay cold lips
 And that is all I seek

 Your lips are as the roses sweet
 Mine as the sulphur strong
 And if you get one kiss from my lips
 Your time will not be long
 'Tis down in yonder garden green love
 Where we used to walk
 The finest flower that e'er was seen
 Is withered to a stalk

 Withered and dried it is sweetheart
 And the flower will ne'er return
 And since I lost my own true love
 What can I do but mourn
 Mourn not for me my own true love
 Mourn not for me I pray
 For I must leave you and the world
 And go into my grave.
 RPT: Mourn not for me my own true love
 Mourn not for me I pray
 For I must leave you and the world
 And go into my grave.

Alternate chords:

C	G
F	C
	G
F	C
	G Am
C	G
F	Am C F
	C

Some transitional riffs:

blows to-da-ay my love
 E|--3-----2--
 B|--0-----0-----3--
 G|--0-0-----2-0-2--
 D|--0-----0--
 A|--2-----
 E|--3-----

a few small drops of rain
 E|--0-----3--
 B|--1-----0--
 G|--0--0-----0--
 D|--2-----2-0--
 A|--3-----2--
 E|-----3--

as much for my true love
 E|--2-----0--
 B|--3--3-----3--0--
 G|--2-----0--
 D|--0-----2--
 A|-----2--
 E|-----0--

a-ny yo-ung man may
 E|--3-----2--
 B|--0-3-0-----3--
 G|--0-----2-0-2--
 D|--0-----0--
 A|--2-----
 E|--3-----

twelve months and a day
 E|--0-----3--
 B|--1-----0--
 G|--0-0-----0--
 D|--2-----2-0--
 A|--3-----2--
 E|-----3--

ROUD 52

Little Musgrave and Lady Barnard

AKA: Matty Groves, Lord Daniel, Lord Banner, Little Mathie Groves, Little Montgrove and Lady Barclay

Summary:

Young handsome Musgrave catches the eye of beautiful Lady Barnard. They meet for a liaison while Lord Barnard is away from home, but a footman (or in this concise version, a brother) snitches on them. The lord returns to catch them *in flagrante*, a sword fight ensues, and Musgrave is killed. Lord Barnard tries to win back his wife's heart, but she only grieves for Musgrave, and it's all too much for the lord and he kills her too.

Setting notes:

A epic soap-opera of a song that has transcended the folk genre, not just into the popular realm with its ubiquitous Matty Groves version (most famously to the tune of Roud 4456, AKA Shady Grove), but also the classical oeuvre, with Benjamin Britten being inspired to pen a choral version*. An old ballad which reportedly appeared in broadsides in 1607**, the earliest full broadside published around 1660***. There followed just a few versions from the British Isles, but a large and diverse number sprang up in the US and the Caribbean, creating great interest during the post war folk revival and beyond. This is the 1860 William Chappell tune I heard via Rosemary Hardman. Most full versions are long, running 30-50 verses, but this concise telling comes from Philip Murray, a tinker, who learned the ballad in his boyhood from an old gypsy named Amos Rice, and sang it to John Sampson in Liverpool in 1891.

Suggested further listening:

"Lady Barnard and Little Musgrave", Rosemary Hardman, *Queen of Hearts*

"Matty Groves", Fairport Convention, *Liege and Lief*

"Little Musgrave", James Yorkston & The Big Eyes Family Players, *Folk Songs*

"Little Matty Groves", Hedy West, *Pretty Saro and Other Appalachian Ballads*

"Little Musgrave", Martin Simpson, *Prodigal Son*

* Also a novel, "Charles Jessold, considered as a murderer" by Wesley Stace, a fictional story of an opera composer who kills his wife and her lover just as his opera based on Little Musgrave is about to open.

** This first mention is a stanza of the ballad quoted in the satirical play "The Knight and the Pestle", still occasionally performed today. You can watch it on Youtube if you're up for two hours of archaic satire.

*** A copy of this in the Bodleian Library has a tantalising note on the back from the collector Antony Wood (1632-1695), stating that the protagonists of the ballad were alive in 1543. This date would rule out the actual Lord Barnard of Barnard Castle, as that was not made a title (and an eyesight testing centre) until 1698. The original broadside actually names "Lady Barnet" (of whom no records remain) which might have been a mondegreen, or maybe Wood is just tormenting us from beyond the grave, in a very "revenant ballad" manner.

ROUD 52: LITTLE MUSGRAVE AND LADY BARNARD

Alternate chords:

	C	Am	F	G		
C	F	G				
C			F			
C	G	C	Am	F	G	C

 G Em C D
There were four-and-twenty ladies
 G C D
Assembled at a ball,
 G C
And who being there but the Lord Barnard's wife,
 G D G Em C D G
The fairest of them all, oh, the fairest of them all

She put her eye on the little Musgrave, / And he put his eye upon she:
'How would you like, my little Musgrave, / One night to tarry with me?'

'To sleep one night with you, fair lady, / It would cause a wonderful sight;
For I know by the ring upon your hand / That you are Lord Barnard's wife.'

'If I am the Lord Barnard's wife, / I mean him to beguile;
For he has gone on a long distance, / And won't be back for a while.'

Up spoke his brother, / An angry man was he;
'Another night I'll not stop in the castle / Till my brother I'll go see.'

When he came to his brother, / He was in a hell of a fright:
'Get up, get up, brother dear! / There's a man in bed with your wife.'

'If it's true you tell unto me, / A man I'll make of thee;
If it's a lie you tell unto me, / It's slain that thou shalt be.'

When he came to his hall, / The bells began to ring,
And all the birds upon the bush / They began to sing.

'How do you like my covering-cloths? / And how do you like my sheets?
How do you like my lady fair, / All night in her arms to sleep?'

'Your covering-cloths I like right well, / Far better than your sheets;
Far better than all your lady fair, / All night in her arms to sleep.'

'Get up, get up now, little Musgrave, / Your clothing do put on;
It shall never be said in all England / That I drew on a naked man.

'There is two swords all in the castle / That cost me very dear;
You take the best, and I the worst, / And let's decide it here.'

The very first blow Musgrave he gave, / He wounded the Lord most sore;
The very first blow the Lord gave him, / Musgrave he struck no more.

She lifted up his dying head / And kissed his cheek and chin:
'I'd sooner have you now, little Musgrave, / Than all their castles or kings.'

ROUD 53

Bill Norrie

AKA: Gil Morice, Child Morris, Childe Maurice, Child Noryce, Bob Norrice

Summary:

A young man named Bill Norrie (or some similar-sounding variation, see above) sends tokens of affection to a woman who has shown him great love in the past. The woman's husband overhears, and immediately finds Bill and kills him, bringing his head back to show his wife, playfully suggesting she might like to use it in a jolly ball game. If this isn't horrific enough, there's more: Morris was her illegitimate son, and the gifts platonic. There is subsequent repenting*.

Setting notes:

Some have suggested this rarely played and not widespread** ballad might be a derivation of Roud 52, with an added twist worthy of a Greek tragedy. This may be true, but on the other hand, killing a man out of (misplaced) jealousy, while a terrible thing to do***, can't be described as an original story, so the usual fistfuls of salt must be taken. The ballad was extremely popular in the 18th century; in the words of Motherwell: "Of the many ancient ballads which have been preserved by tradition among the Peasantry of Scotland, none has excited more interest in the world of letters than the beautiful and pathetic tale of Gil Morice." However, the modern world, peasantry and otherwise, has largely forsaken it, and today the song is represented by a small but distinct handful of threads, most recognisably Carthy's direct and haunting re-imagining of the 1825 version collected from Widow McCormick of Paisley Scotland, set to an old Sacred Harp tune. It's not simple to play *à la Carthy* (nor to sing, without a bit of practice), so here I humbly offer a more straightforward accompaniment.

Suggested further listening:

"Bill Norrie", Martin Carthy, *Right of Passage*

"Child Morris", Spiers and Boden, *Songs*

"Gil Morice", Ewan MacColl, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads Vol 3*

"Child Maurice", Martha Stewart, *Hamish Henderson Collects, Vol. 2*

* The ballad ends with the grimly funny non-apology from the husband who blames the wife for not daring to tell him she had an illegitimate son who lived in the woods, as if she'd never heard a folk ballad before.

** Only one very fragmentary version made its way to Newfoundland, Canada, which seems surprising if we are to believe Motherwell's statement about its popularity in Scotland. It goes to show that, like life, successful ballad transmission often hangs on a multiplicity of coincidences, without which you're going nowhere.

*** Terrible, yes, but if you happen to be a rich lord, you'll probably get away with it without too much bother.

ROUD 54

Barbara Allen

AKA: Barbara Ellen, Barbary Allen, Bonnie Barbara Allen, Sir John Graham

Summary:

A lovesick man is dying from a broken heart. The object of his affection, Barbara Allen, visits him, but somewhat brusquely refuses* to give him the love he craves, so he dies. Surprisingly, considering her prior feelings, she is overtaken with grief, and she also dies, and is buried in an adjoining grave. In later versions, a rose grows from her grave, a briar from his, and they grow until intertwined**.

Setting notes:

Possibly the most widely known traditional folk song of them all, this originally quite lengthy melodrama was not found very widely in England and Scotland at the end of the 19th century. However, as the great European diaspora colonised America, an abbreviated version spread like wildfire; it was a song that, according to multiple sources almost everyone knew. By the 1960s, tune collector Bertrand Bronson found 198 melodies relating to the song. It was first mentioned in the diary of Samuel Pepys - on 2nd January 1666 he recounted how he had enjoyed an evening singing with Mrs Knipp (an actress), including "her little Scotch*** song of Barbary Allen". Due to its subsequent popularity you can now find a multitude of recordings in almost every genre, but this version comes from Ethel Findlater, recorded in Orkney in the summer of 1969. She learned the song from her mother who had it written down without a melody. Later Ethel was taught this tune from a soldier who had, judging by the style, probably picked it up from American servicemen while in Europe.

Suggested further listening:

"Barbara Allen", Shirley Collins, *The Power of the True Love Knot*

"Barbara Allen", Ethel Findlater, *[Tobhar an Dualchais archive (1969 version)]*

"Barbara Allen", The Furrow Collective, *Wild Hog*

"Barbry Ellen", Caroline Hughes, *Sheep-Crook and Black Dog*

* In early written versions of the ballad, no reason is given for Barbara's rebuff. Later, verses are added (or old verses reappear) that show the protagonist as a dissolute drunkard and gambler, beyond Barbara's help.

** This rose and briar was also not present in early sources, the most popular theory being that it is a verse that has floated over from Lord Lovel (Roud 48) to provide a more satisfying romantic resolution.

*** There's nothing to definitively mark this song as originating in Scotland, apart from the fact that it sounds like it could be. In fact, the most common location mentioned is "Scarlet Town", which may be a pun on Reading, and indeed Reading itself is mentioned in some early recorded versions, eg. from Caroline Hughes above.

ROUD 55

Lord Afore and Mary Flynn

AKA: Prince Robert, Harry Saunders, Earl Robert

Summary:

A mother disapproves of her daughter-in-law, so she poisons her son*. His wife is summoned, but she arrives too late. She requests some of his personal possessions, but the mother refuses, saying the possessions (in this case a ring) have been destroyed by the pain of his death. The wife dies of grief upon her husband's grave**.

Setting notes:

For many years it was assumed this ballad was extinct in the tradition, until Irish song collector Tom Munnely heard Jim Kelly belting it out in a Dublin pub in 1969. Kelly knew it by the "Lord Afore and Mary Flynn" title, clearly a mondegreen for the protagonists Lord Robert and Mary Florence that can be found in the similar written version from 1825, as collected by Francis Child from the Scottish ballad enthusiast William Motherwell. The only other lineage of the ballad was supposedly collected under dubious circumstances in 1925 in West Virginia, recorded by Peggy Seeger as "Harry Saunders". No tunes were collected with the early 19th century versions, so the remarkably consistent melody circulating in Ireland is most probably a relatively recent localised construct***. It has been rarely recorded since its rediscovery, although some excellent recordings in the last few years might mark a long overdue resurgence.

Suggested further listening:

"Lord Afore", Jim Kelly, *Early Ballads in Ireland*

"Lord Afore and Mary Flynn", Al O'Donnell, *Al O'Donnell 2*

"Lord Afore and Mary Flynn", Jackie Oates, *Jackie Oates*

"Prince Robert", Ewan McLennan, *Stories Still Untold*

"Harry Saunders", Peggy Seeger, *Penelope Isn't Waiting Any More*

* There's a slightly confusing note among Francis Child's analysis of this ballad in which he insists "There are other ballad-stories of a mother's poisoning because of displeasure at a son's match" and then annoyingly fails to name them. There are none that I can find within the anglophone tradition, but I did find a Spanish version of The Cruel Brother called "El testamento de Amelia" which includes a poisoned son, and a ballad from the region around Western Ukraine about a mother attempting to poison her son's wife, but poisoning him instead, called "Vdova otravljæet nevëstu" (which interestingly adopts the intertwined grave-shrubbery ending much discussed elsewhere, e.g. Rouds 48, 54). There will be prizes awarded for anyone who can find any more.

** Two of the four versions collected by child end with yet another example of the tangled grave plants, this time a birch (or *birk* in the original Scots) and briar intertwining in both instances.

*** My initial instinct was that it might have derived from an existing air, as melodies for Irish songs often are. I spent a little time trying to find something that fitted, but drew a blank, meaning (a) it's an original tune of unknown authorship (b) the air was never written down or, most likely, (c) my air-research is lacking.

ROUD 56

Young Johnstone

AKA: Young Johnston, Young Johnson, Lord John's Murder, William and the Young Colonel, The Cruel Knight

Summary:

While drinking wine* with William Johnstone, a young soldier makes a disrespectful remark about Johnstone's sister. Johnstone kills him, then fearing for his life, flees the scene, ending up at his lover's** house (who happens to be the sister of the young soldier). She takes him in and hides him. While he sleeps, soldiers come for Johnstone, so his lover wakes him, but he stabs her, probably by mistake. He entreats her to cling to life until he can get help, but she dies, and he ends his own life in grief.

Setting notes:

This was clearly a popular ballad in the 19th century, as it appears in a multitude of ballad books of the era, in the context of discussions around the ballad's themes, and the motivation of Johnstone for stabbing his sweetheart. The latter is allegedly settled by Motherwell who claimed to have found a verse that clarifies the fact that Johnstone mistakenly stabs his lover in his sleepy confusion, thinking he was being attacked, but other sources suggest the act was a form of class revenge. Perthshire source singer Betsy Whyte is absolutely insistent that the song is a true story, the Johnstones being her antecedents; a well known family of highly violent border reivers who were particularly active in the 16th century; one incident involving a stolen horse was immortalised in *The Lads of Wamphray* (Roud 4011) may well have some basis in truth, but the events of this ballad are not recounted anywhere else. The tune is based, as are most modern recordings, on Betsy's singing, the words abridged from Motherwell, from the recitation of Jeanie Nicol, May 4, 1825.

Suggested further listening:

"Young Johnston", Betsy Whyte, *The Muckle Sangs*

"Young Johnstone", June Tabor, *An Echo of Hooves*

"Young Johnson", Jackie Oates, *Saturnine*

"Young Johnstone", Alasdair Roberts, Amble Skuse & David McGuinness, *What News*

* This is a common way to open a ballad in Eastern Europe. For example in Serbia, many ballads are introduced with the protagonist wine-drinking (*vino pije*) with someone, with the interruption of the drinking creating the setup to the story.

** Longer versions of the ballad have him first seeking shelter with his mother and his sister, but being denied out of fear of reprisals. Only his true love is prepared to stick her neck out for Johnstone, and perhaps this ballad's traditionalist message is that if a lover is allowed to supercede family, only tragedy will follow.

ROUD 56: YOUNG JOHNSTONE

G C G
Sweet William and the young Colonel

D
One day were drinking wine:

G C
'It's I will marry your sister,
G D
If you will marry mine.'

'I will not marry your sister, / Although her hair be brown;
But I'll keep her for my liberty-wife, / As I ride through the town.'

William, having his two-edged sword, / He leaned quite low to the ground,
And he has given the young Colonel / A deep and a deadly wound.

He rode, he rode, and away he rode, / Till he came to his true-love's bower;
'Oh open, oh open, my true-love,' he says, / 'And let your sweetheart in.

'What ails thee, Sweet William?' / 'What harm now have you done?'
'Oh I have killed thy brother dear, / And his heart's blood sore does run.'

'If you have killed my brother dear, / It's oh and alas for me!
But between the blankets and the sheets / It's there I will hide thee!'

'Lie down, lie down, Sweet William,' she says, / 'Lie down and take a sleep;
It's o'er the chamber I will watch, / Thy fair body to keep.'

She had not watched at the chamber-door / An hour but only three,
Till four and twenty belted knights / Did seek his fair body.

'Rise up, rise up, Sweet William,' she says, / 'Rise up, and go away;
For four and twenty belted knights / Were seeking thy body.'

Sweet William, having his two-edged sword, / He leaned it low to the ground,
And he has given his own true-love / A deep and deadly wound.

'What ails thee, Sweet William?' she says, / 'What harm now have I done?
I never harmed a hair of your head / Since ever this love began.'

'Oh live, oh live, my own true-love, / Oh live but half an hour,
And the best doctor in London town / Shall come within thy bower.'

'How can I live? how shall I live? / How can I live half an hour?
For don't you see my very heart's blood / All sprinkled on the floor?'

William, having his two-edged sword, / He leaned it low to the ground,
And he has given his own body / A deep and deadly wound.

Alternate chords:

D	G	D
		A
D		G
D		A



ROUD 57

False Foodrage

AKA: Fause Foodrage, False Foudrage, King O'Luve, East Muir King

Summary:

Three kings compete for the hand of a lady, and one wins it, much to the chagrin of the others. One of the other jealous kings hires a reprehensible assassin, False Foodrage*, to murder the victorious king and his new bride. Foodrage kills the king, but the pregnant wife begs for mercy. Foodrage says he will spare her, but if her child is a boy, he will be hanged. When her child is due, the queen drugs her guards and escapes, and gives birth to a son in a nearby pigsty. Local man Wise William then swaps the baby boy for his own daughter before the Lady is recaptured and held captive by Foodrage. When the boy grows up, he learns of his father's fate and his mother's imprisonment and enacts vengeance, killing Foodrage, freeing his mother, gaining his inheritance, and finally marrying William's now grown-up daughter.

Setting notes:

According to Scottish song collectors Motherwell and Scott, this was initially popular in many parts of Scotland in the 19th century. The full story** (that can be gleaned from piecing together the various versions and fragments gathered by Francis Child) is an epic saga of love, murder, imprisonment, escape and vengeance spanning decades. Brian Peters has done a wonderful job of encompassing all the drama from the available source material, and the words given here are a lightly abridged version of his endeavours. The tune comes from the Harris family of Perthshire, via singer and Harris aficionado Katherine Campbell. Mrs Harris learned it in 1790, aged 8, from her mother's old family nurse, Jannie Scott, who had been in service since 1745.

Suggested further listening:

"False Foudrage", Brian Peters, *Songs of Trial and Triumph*

"East Muir King", Katherine Campbell, *The Songs of Amelia and Jane Harris*

"Fause Foodrage", Aris Halkias, [Youtube]

"False Foodrage", Chris Coe, *A Wiser Fool*

* This odd name had me wondering where it might have come from. Entirely by accident I stumbled across the fact that in French *foudrage* (as the name is sometimes spelled in old sources) means lightning. I don't know if there's any credence to this, but False Lightning would be a great name for an elusive but deadly assassin.

** Like many epic ballads, there are analogues to be found in Scandinavia, the most prevalent being "Ung Villim" (Young William), twenty three versions of which have been found in Denmark. Come to think of it, it would make for an excellent Scandi-noir TV series.

ROUD 57: FALSE FOODRAGE

Em

The Eastmuir king and the Westmuir king

D

And the king of Honorie

C Bm

They've courted of a fair young maid

A Bm Em

All from the North country

Alternate chords:

Am		G
F		Em
D	Em	Am

2. King Eastmuir's courted her for gold / King Westmuir for her fee
But the King of Honor's won her heart / His bride all for to be
3. King Eastmuir swore a dreadful oath / All on their wedding day
And he has sent for False Foodrage / The king all for to slay
4. And at the dead hour of the night / When all were fast abed
False Foodrage so soft crept in / Stood at King Honor's head
5. And his lady, she awakened / All from a drowsy dream
She saw her bride-bed swim with blood / And her good lord lay slain
6. 'Oh spare my life, False Foodrage / Until I lighter be
Spare me that I may bear the child / That King Honor's left with me.'
7. 'Well if it be a lass, he said / Well nursed shall she be
But if it be a little boy / Then hanged he will be.'
9. Four and twenty valiant knights / Were set the queen for to guard
And four stood at her bower door / To keep both watch and ward
10. But when her time drew near its end / She's given them beer and wine
And she has made them all as drunk / As any wildwood swine
11. And she's slipped out of the window / She's wandered out and in
And in the very swine sty / The queen brought forth a son
12. Now they have cast lots in the town / For who should go to the queen
And the lot it fell on Wise William / And he's sent his wife for him
13. 'A favour, Wise William's wife / This favour grant to me
Change your lass for my little boy / That King Honor left with me
14. And you will learn my gay goshawk / Well how to breast a steed
And I will learn your turtle-dove / As well to write and read.'
15. When days were gone and years come on / Wise William he thought long
And he has taken Honor's son / And they've a-hunting gone
16. 'Do you see yon high, high castle / With walls and towers fair
Well if every man had back his own / Of it you'd be the heir
17. For if you should slay False Foodrage / You'd set the wrong to right
For he has slain your father / E'er you ever saw the light
18. And if you should slay False Foodrage / There's no man would you blame
For he keeps your mother prisoner / And she dare not let you home.'
19. So he's set his bow all to his back / He's climbed the castle wall
And there he's met with False Foodrage / A-walking in the hall
20. 'Oh what ails you, my bonny boy / What ails you at me
For I did never do you wrong / Your face I ne'er did see.'
21. 'Oh hold your tongue, False Foodrage / For I know you and who you be.'
And he has pierced him through the heart / And set his mother free
22. And he has given to Wise William / The best part of his land
And he has wed his turtle-dove / With the ring from off his hand.

ROUD 58

Jellon Graeme

AKA: Jellon Graeme, Jellon Graham, Red Robber

Summary:

Jellon Graeme kills his pregnant lover as a means of saving his own life from her cruel father who does not approve of the love match. He spares the child, and raises them* with help from his sister. When the child is grown, Jellon Graeme takes him into the forest where they ask after their absent mother. Graeme admits to the crime, and the child kills their father.

Setting notes:

If you were looking to make a simpler and more accessible** version of the False Foodrage, the previous ballad, you might end up with something close to this. That may have been how this ballad emerged; conversely sometimes it can be shown that ballads are made more complex over time, as people add their own ideas, prejudices and stylistic flourishes. Either way, if it was abbreviated as an attempt at popularisation, that mission failed spectacularly, as it remains an even more rarely heard ballad than Roud 57. No tunes were recorded when this ballad was first collected in the 18th century, all we have is from Greig's 1925 recording of a few verses from Alexander Robb, of New Deer, Aberdeenshire. As tune collector Bertrand Bronson admits, it is much "worn down", consisting of the same tune repeated twice for each verse, which might make for a challenging listen over 20+ verses. I used the Robb tune for the first half of the verse, and then wrote a second half of my own.

Suggested further listening:

"Jellon Graeme", Peggy Seeger, *Songs of Love and Politics*

"Jellon Graeme", Broadside Electric, *With Teeth*

"Jellon Graeme", Alexander Robb, [Youtube video]

"Red Robber"***, Sara Grey & Kieron Means, *Better Days a Comin*

"Jellon Graham", The Maledictions, *Shallow Graves*

* This ballad is mostly bleakly plausible, but some versions do have supernatural elements, eg. the child's rapid growth is given as evidence of magic. Also, some versions describe the site of the woman's death as a patch of ground where nothing grows, a folkloric idea which appears elsewhere. For example, near Disley, Cheshire there is a "Murder stone" a small monument marking the murder of William Wood in 1823. Local lore is that there is a patch of infertile earth nearby, and that is where Wood's bloodied head hit the ground.

** "Accessible" meaning a less confusing story, rather than having more pleasant subject matter - in that regard this is far worse. The murder here is so brutal and intimate, it may account for its lack of popularity.

*** This interesting and concise country version was conceived in 2007 by Bob Coltman.

ROUD 58: JELLON GRAME

Alternate chords:

Am	G
D	C
G	D
Em	D C

Em D
1. O Jellon Grame sat in Silver Wood,

A G
He whistled and he sang,

D A
And he has called his little foot-page,

Bm A G
His errand for to gang.

2. 'Get up, my bonny boy,' he says, / 'As quick as ere you may;
For you must go for Lillie Flower, / Before the break of day.'
3. The boy he's buckled his belt about, / And through the green-wood ran,
And he came to the lady's bower-door, / Before the day did dawn.
4. 'You're bidden come to Silver Wood, / But I fear you'll never win home;
You're bidden come to Silver Wood, / And speak with Jellon Grame.'
5. 'O I will go to Silver Wood, / Though I should never go home;
For the thing I most desire on earth / Is to speak with Jellon Grame.'
6. She had not ridden a mile, a mile, / A mile but barely three,
'Ere she came to a new made grave, / Beneath a green oak tree.
7. O up then started Jellon Grame, / Out of a bush hard bye:
'Light down, light down now Lillie Flower / For it's here that you must lie.'
8. She lighted off her milk-white steed, / And knelt upon her knee:
'O mercy, mercy, Jellon Grame! / For I'm not prepared to die.
9. 'Your bairn, that stirs between my sides, / Must shortly see the light;
But to see it weltring in my blood / Would be a piteous sight.'
10. 'O should I spare your life,' he says, / 'Until that bairn be born,
I know full well your stern father / Would hang me on the morn.'
11. 'O spare my life now, Jellon Grame! / My father you ne'er need dread;
I'll keep my bairn in the good green wood, / Or with it I'll beg my bread.'
12. He took no pity on that lady, / Though she for life did pray;
But pierced her through the fair body, / As at his feet she lay.
13. He felt no pity for that lady, / Though she was lying dead;
But he felt some for the bonny boy, / Lay weltring in her blood.
14. Up has he taken that bonny boy, / Given him to nurses nine,
Three to wake, and three to sleep, / And three to go between.
15. And he's brought up that bonny boy, / Called him his sister's son;
He thought no man would e'er find out / The deed that he had done.
16. But it so fell out upon a time, / As a hunting they did go,
That they rested them in Silver Wood, / Upon a summer-day.
17. Then out it spoke that bonny boy, / While the tear stood in his eye,
'O tell me this now, Jellon Grame, / And I pray you do not lie.
18. 'The reason that my mother dear / Does never take me home?
To keep me still in banishment / Is both a sin and shame.'
19. 'You wonder that your mother dear / Does never send for thee;
Lo, there's the place I slew thy mother, / Beneath that green oak tree.'
20. With that the boy has bent his bow, / It was both stout and long,
And through and through him Jellon Grame / He's sent an arrow gone.
21. Says, 'Lie you there now, Jellon Grame, / My curse upon you weigh;
The place my mother lies buried in / Is far too good for thee.'

ROUD 59

Fair Mary of Wallington

AKA: The Fair Maid of Wallington, Wallington, The Bonny Earl of Livingston, Lady Maisry

Summary:

A desperately sad story* of seven sisters, five of whom have died in childbirth by the start of this ballad. It tells the story of the sixth sister, who understandably does not want children, but she is forced to wed anyway, subsequently also dying tragically in childbirth in truly horrifying circumstances. Her chilling last words are the heartbreaking prediction that her younger sister will suffer the same fate.

Setting notes:

This deeply sad ballad's earliest source dates back to a communication between Bishop Percy and Roger Hart in a 1775 Scottish manuscript. Most versions set the story in Wallington, a real place in Northumbria, in a castle that was the ancestral seat of the Trevelyan family, upon which was built Wallington Hall**. Other later versions place the action in Livingston***, West Lothian. The earliest recorded version comes from Scottish farmhand Bell Duncan in 1934, via a very scratchy wax cylinder (even by wax cylinder standards). At some point Maddy Prior came up with a tune (no historic tunes were ever recorded), and gave it to June Tabor who recorded it, and this is the tune given here. The words are mostly Tabor's, with some additions from Child's "C" version to maintain the strophic nature of the song, and clarify the final grim prediction.

Suggested further listening:

"Wallington", Cath and Phil Tyler, *The Ox and the Ax*
"Bonny Earl of Livingston'", Graham and Eileen Pratt, *Early Birds*
"Maisrie of Livingstone", Corinne Male, *To Tell the Story Truly*
"The Fair Maid of Wallington", June Tabor, *Airs and Graces*
"Bonnie Earl of Livingstone", Phil Cooper, *Written In Our Eyes*
"Lady Maisry", Cloudstreet, *The Fiddleship*

* A Breton ballad tells effectively the same story of the demise of a succession of wives of wealthy nobleman Pontplencoat during childbirth, possibly based on the life of early 15th century admiral, Jean de Penhoat.

** From 1928 Wallington Hall was the home of Sir Charles Philips Trevelyan, who inherited it from his aristocratic forbears (yet remained a staunch socialist and Labour Party member for his whole life) before donating the hall to the National Trust in 1942. The Trevelyan archives mention the ballad discussed here.

** In both versions, there are examples of early collectors insisting the events are based on real people. The finger is usually pointed at the very real Elizabeth Gordon, Lady of Livingstone (1596 - 1643). None of the details of her family tree (though she did have seventeen siblings, plenty to cover the seven in the song) or the events that befell them in real life match up to the ballad in any way, which should come as no surprise by now.

ROUD 59: FAIR MARY OF WALLINGTON

Alternate chords:

Am	Em	D	Am
Am	Em	D	Am
	Em	Am	G D
Am	Em	D	Am

Dm Am G Dm
When we were silly sisters, seven sisters were so mild,
Dm Am G Dm
Five went to bride bed and five are dead with child.
 Am Dm C G
Then it's up spoke young Mary and it's single she would bide,
Dm Am G Dm
For if ever she was in a man's bed, the same death she would die.

"Oh it's take no vows, Mary, for fear they broken be,
For there's a knight in Wallington asking good will of thee."
"Oh if there is a knight, mother, asking good will of me,
Then it's in three quarters of a year you may bury me."

Well, she had not been in Wallington three quarters and a day
Till she was as big with baby as any lady.
"Oh is there not a boy in this town that is wearing hose and shoe?"
Then it's up spoke a page-boy, "Your errand I'll go!"

"Give respects to my mother as she sits in her chair of stone;
Ask her how she likes the news of seven to have but one."
When her mother she heard the news in anger cried she
And she's kicked the table with her foot and kicked it with her knee.

Then she's called for her waiting-maid and also her stable-groom:
"Come fetch me my cloak and go saddle up the brown."
But when they came to Wallington and into Wallington Hall
There was four and twenty ladies that let the tears down fall.

And her daughter, she'd a scope into her cheek and her chin,
All for to keep her sweet life till her mother she come in.
Now she's taken a razor that was both sharp and fine
And from out of her left side she's took the heir to Wallington.

Then out it spake her sister dear, as she sat at her head
"That man is not in Christendom shall make me die sicken dead."
"O hold your tongue, my young daughter, let all your folly be,
For ye shall be married ere this day week, tho the same death you'll die."

And when we were silly sisters, seven sisters were so mild,
Five went to bride bed and five are dead with child.
Then it's up spoke young Mary and it's single she would bide,
For if ever she was in man's bed, the same death she would die.

ROUD 60

The Brisk Young Sailor

AKA: Died For Love, Will Ye Gang Love, I Wish I Wish, My True Love Once He Courted Me, Apron Strings, There is an Alehouse in this Town, The Student Boy, On Yonder Hill

Summary:

A woman pines for her absent lover* who has abandoned her (sometimes pregnant) while carousing with other women in the alehouse. The ballad normally ends with the woman giving instructions for her burial, since she will certainly die for love.

Setting notes:

Experts surmise that this is either a fragment of a longer ballad that has been “worn down” through time, or just a short amalgamation of ballad tropes. It was overlooked by Francis Child for his ballad collection almost certainly for that reason. However, it has captured the imagination of many; the list of titles above is but a tiny sample of the many guises under which this song has appeared. In terms of origins, it has been a thorn in the side of many a ballad researcher, for its broad themes and high percentage of commonly used “floating verses” can be linked to an extensive set of different older ballads. That, plus its subsequent multiple and diverse adaptations from all over the anglophone ballad universe, make it almost impossible to force any generalised version of the ballad into a particular timeline. All we can say is that there are certainly verses that date back to the early 17th century. The great Mike Waterson assembled an epically complete version from a disparate range of sources, which was lost for a while, then beautifully brought back to life by Martin and Eliza Carthy in 2014**. Unfortunately it's a little too long for this imprint, so this is a more succinct version, collected by Ann Gilchrist from a 70 year old carpenter, Mr James Bayliff of Bardonia, Westmorland in 1909 (Bayliff omitted the final “died for love” verse, but I have added it here to complete the tale). The tune is a version of one of the most commonly used, e.g. by Shirley Collins.

Suggested further listening:

“Died for Love”, Martin & Eliza Carthy, *The Moral of the Elephant*

“Died for Love”, Shirley Collins, *False True Lovers*

“Will Ye Gang Love”, Archie Fisher, *Will Ye Gang Love*

“Go Dig My Grave”, Lankum, *False Lankum*

* The most common trade of the absent lover is sailor, but the widely travelled nature of the ballad means you could find a version to besmirch almost any occupation. A non-exhaustive list would include: farmer, butcher, fisherman, student, carter, drummer, miner, shepherd and (not so much an occupation as a lifestyle) Irishman.

** Do seek out the video of Martin and Eliza performing this at McCabe's in 2015. It includes a fascinating introduction from Martin and Eliza, and also acts as a beautiful tribute to Mike Waterson.

ROUD 60: THE BRISK YOUNG SAILOR

C F C
A brisk young sailor he courted me,
F C
He robbed me of my liberty,
F C
My liberty and my right good will
G F
I must confess I love him still.

Alternate chords:

G C G
C G
C G
D F

There is an ale-house in the town,
Where my love goes and sits him down;
He pulls a strange girl all on his knee
And isn't that a grief to me.

A grief to me, and I'll tell you why:
Because she has more gold than I,
But the gold will waste and the beauty blast
He'll come to a poor girl like me at last.

I wish my baby it was born
Sat smiling on its nurse's knee;
And I myself was in my grave
With the green grass growing over me.

I wish, I wish, but it's all in vain,
I wish I was a maid again.
But a maid again I never will be
Till an apple grows on an orange tree.

Dig me my grave long wide and deep
Put a marble stone at my head and feet
And a turtle dove placed up above
To let them know that I died for love

More info and the audio files that accompany this book can be found at

singyonder.co.uk*

Some things that helped me and/or you might enjoy, in addition to those found in Volumes 1-5**:

Books:

"The ballad book; a selection of the choicest old ballads", William Allingham
"The Viking book of folk ballads of the English-speaking world", Albert B Friedman
"Narrative singing in Ireland : lays, ballads, come-all-yes, and other songs", Hugh Shields
"Twelve Romantic Scottish Ballads: With the Original Airs", Robert Chambers
"The Ballads of Scotland", William Edmondstoune Aytoun
"Death in the Ballad: A Comparative Study", Agnes McDougall
"Ancient Ballads: Traditionally Sung in New England", Helen Hartness Flanders
"Hungarian classical ballads and their folklore", A. M. Leader
"Popular culture in early modern Europe", Peter Burke
"Ancient Meols: or, Some account of the antiquities found near Dove Point", A. Hume
"Ballads and sea songs from Nova Scotia", W. Roy Mackenzie

Online:

<http://walterscott.eu/education/ballads/> - Info regarding border ballads

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* If you are from the future and found a rare hard copy version at the back of a dusty loft, and none of the links or email addresses work, it's possible I have either died, or otherwise departed from the internet to live in a log cabin somewhere. Either way, don't try and find me, go and learn some folk songs instead.

** You can find the full list of references so far at <http://singyonder.co.uk/references>

*** It won't. Will it? No it definitely won't. Maybe it will. Who knows. It will be worth the wait.

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