

LIVING ENGLISH BROADSIDE BALLADS 1550-1750
SONG, ART, DANCE, CULTURE

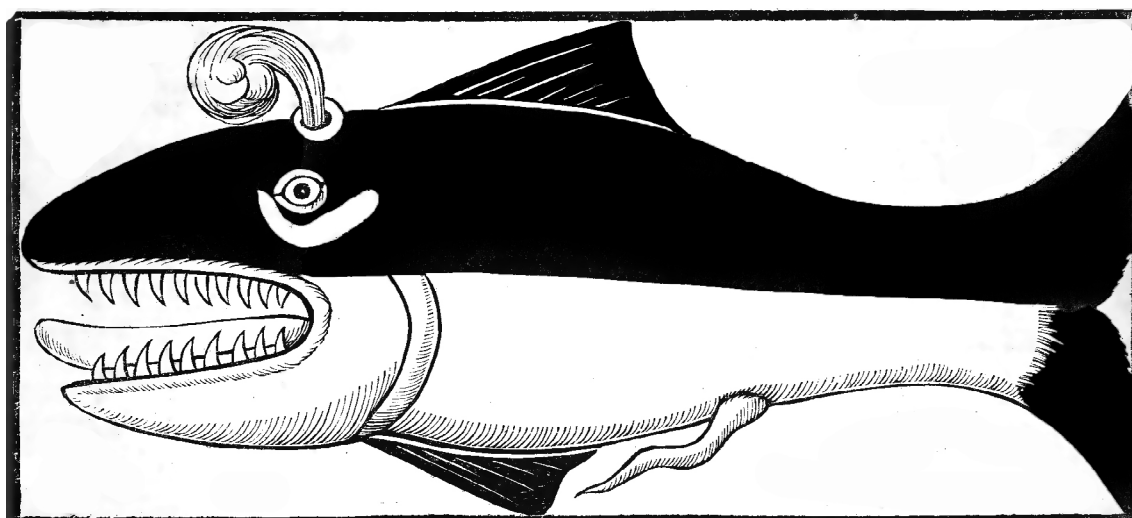
A Taste of Song



Huntington Library Conference
April 4-5, 2014

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Introduction

By Katherine Steele Brokaw, UC-Merced

In early modern ballads, “melody made meaning,” as Christopher Marsh puts it. Or in Bruce Smith’s words, “Ballads may begin within, they may reverberate around, but they have their social being among.” Today’s lunch asks us to listen to melody, vocal quality, and instrumentation, and to the sounds made in a shared space. Marsh, Smith, and all of the scholar-singers we hear today have told us that musical and



social contexts are as important to understanding a ballad’s meaning as its words, and so it is apt that they will be putting their scholarship into practice through today’s performances.

Ballad tunes were so familiar to early moderns that most broadsides tell their reader that the words of a given ballad are to be sung, for example “to the tune of Greensleeves.” These tunes tended to be catchy, easy to sing, and repetitive, not unlike songs by Pete Seeger or Lady Gaga. A new ballad sung to an old familiar melody would call upon a listener’s associations, personal and intertextual, with other ballads. If we heard a new song today that was sung to the tune of “Blowin’ in the Wind,” its meaning for us would be created by a combination of the new words, Dylan’s lyrics, and our memory of singing the older song around a campfire with a high school sweetheart.

Ballad melodies were also mobile, moving across social, political, and economic lines. Rich and poor, Catholic and Protestant, Northern and Southern—people across England shared and loved the same tunes. Such was the popularity of these melodies that some Protestant reformers set psalms to popular ballad tunes in hopes that they would catch on when sung in a more popular form. Part of the interpretive force of ballad melodies was thus created socially, but the notes

themselves—the intervals and rhythms and tempos—conjured moods and told stories. Early modern musical theorists thought about how melody related to affect, and labeled what we would call minor and major scales as “Dorian” and “Ionian.” Early seventeenth-century music theorist Charles Butler suggests that tunes in the Dorian mode incite the listener to “sobriety, prudence,

modesti, and godliness,” whereas Ionian songs stimulate “honest mirth and delight.”

In Christopher Marsh’s words, melodies “were capable of reinforcing, altering, and destabilizing textual messages,” and as we listen to today’s songs, we can think about what messages the tunes convey, and how those messages do or do not cooperate with the ballad’s words. The haunting melody of “A Noble Riddle” might fit its mode of inquiry, but does it undermine the ballad’s happy ending? How do the fast tempo and combination of cascading scales and big melodic leaps fit the aquatic subject matter and celebration of spring in “The Thames Uncased”? “The Crost Couple”’s broadside tells us it is sung to the “Northern Tune, much in fashion”: what is it about this tune that may have made it so popular and adaptable? When we hear “A New Yorkshire Song” sung to the still-popular tune of “Greensleeves,” what do our own associations with that melody to do our experience of the ballad? And finally, how do today’s fiddle playing and the differences between the timbres and vocal ranges of each singer change how acoustic meaning is created in each song?

You may think about these kinds of questions as you listen to today’s music, but most of all, we hope you enjoy your taste of song!

The panges of Love and lovers fittes.



WAs not good Kyng Salamon
Ravished in sondry wyse
with every livelie Paragon
That glistered before his eyes
If this be true as trewe it was
Lady lady.
why should not I serve you alas
My deare lady.

When Paris was enamoured
with Helena dame bewties peare
whom Venus first him promised
To venter on and not to feare
what sturdy stormes endured he
Lady lady
To winne her loveer it would be
My deare ladye.

Knowe ye not howe Troylus
Languished and lost his joye
with fittes and fevers mervailous
For Cresseda that dwelt in Troye
Tyll pytie planted in her brest
ladie ladie.
To slepe with him & graunt him rest
My deare ladye.

I read sometime howe venterous
Leander was his love to please
who swomme the waters perillous
Of Abidon those surginge sease

To come to her where as she lay
ladie ladie.
Tyll he was drowned by the waye
my deare ladye.

Besides these matters marveilous
Good Lady yet I can tell the more
The Gods have ben full amourous
As Jupiter by learned lore
who changed his shape as fame hath spred
ladie ladye.
To come to Alcumenaes bed.
My deare ladye.

And if bewtie breed such blisfulnesse
Enamouring both God and man
Good Lady let no wilfulnesse
Exuperate your bewtye then
To slaye the hertes that yeld & crave
ladie ladye
The graunt of your goodwil to have
My deare ladye.



Finis.

Quod W. E.

Imprinted at London in Smithfeld
in the parish of Saynt Barthel-
mewes Hospitall by
Richard Lant.

An. Dmni. M.D.lix. xxii. Mar:



A Noble Riddle wisele Expounded:

OR,

The Maids answer to the Knights three Questions.

She with her excellent wit and civil carriage,
Won a young Knight to joyn with her in marriage.

This gallant couple now are man and wife,
And she with him doth lead a pleasant life.

The tune is Lay the bent to the bonny broom.



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 ra re.

There was a Knight of Noble worth,
lay the bent, etc.
Which also lived in the North.
fa la, etc.

The Knight of courage stout and brave,
lay the bent, etc.
A Wife he did desire to have.
fa la, etc.

He knocked at the Ladies Gate,
lay the bent, etc.

One evening when it was very late,
fa la, etc.

The youngest sister she let him in,
lay the bent, etc.
And pind the doore with a silver pin
fa la, etc.

The second sister she made his bed,
lay the bent, etc.
And laid soft Pillows under his head,
fa la, etc.

The youngest Daughter that same night
lay the bent. etc.
She went to bed with this young Knight
fa la, etc.



And in the morning when it was day,
lay the bent etc.

These words unto him she did say
fa la, etc.

Now you have had your will quoth she
lay the bent, etc.

I pray sir Knight will you marry me?
fa la. etc.

The young brave knight to her replyd,
lay the bent. etc,

Thy suit fair Maid shall not be denyd.
fa la. etc.

If thou canst answer me questions three,
lay the bent to the bonny broom,
This vary day will I marry thee,
fa la, etc.

Kind sir in love O then quoth she
lay the bent. etc.

Tell me what your questions be,
fa la. etc.

O what is longer then the way?
lay the bent. etc.

Or what is deeper then the Sea?
fa la. etc.

O what is louder then a Horn?
lay the bent. etc.

Or what is sharper then a Thorn?
fa la. etc.

Or what is greener then the Grasse?
lay the bent. etc.

Or what is worse then women was?
fa la. etc,

O Love is longer then the way,
lay the bent, etc,

And Hell is deeper then the Sea,
fa la etc,

And thunders louder than a horn,
lay the bent, etc.

And hungers sharper than a thorn,
fa la, etc.

And poyson is greener then the grass,
lay the bent, etc.

And the Divel is worse then woman was,
fa la, etc.

When she these questions answered had.
Lay the bent, etc.

The Knight became exceeding glad,
fa la. etc.

And having throughly tryd her wit,
lay the bent, etc.

He much commended her for it,
fa la, etc,

And after as tis verifid,
lay the bent, etc.

He made of her his lovely Bride,
fa la, etc.

So now fair Maidens all adieu,
lay the bent, etc.

This Song I dedicate to you,
fa lay, etc.

I wish that you may constant prove.
lay the bent, etc.

Unto the man that you doe
fa la, etc.

A Lamentation from Rome, how the Pope doth bewaile, That the Rebelles in England can not prevaile, To the tune of Rowe well ye Mariners.



All you that newes would here,
 Geve eare to me poore Fabyn
 Flye,
 At Rome I was this yere,
 And in the Pope his nose dyd lye,
 But there I could not long abide,
 He blew me out of every side:
 For furst when he had harde the newes,
 That Rebelles dyd their Prince misuse,
 Then he with joye,
 Did sporte him selfe with many a toye,
 he then so stout,
 From that his nose he blew me out.

But as he was aslepe,
 Into the same againe I goot:
 I crept there in so depe,
 That I had almost burnt my coote,
 New newes to him was brought that night.
 The Rebelles they weare put to flight,
 But Lord how then the Pope toke one,
 And called for a Mary bone,
 up howgh make hast:
 My lovers all be like to waste,
 ryse Cardnall, up priest,
 Saint Peter he doth what he lest.

So then they fell to Messe,

The Fryers one their Beades dyd praye,
 The Pope began to blesse,
 At last he weist not what to saye.
 It chanced so the next day morne,
 A Post came blowing of his Horne,
 Saying Northomberland is take,
 But then the Pope began to quake.
 he then rubd nose,
 With Pilgrome salve be noynt his hose,
 runne here, runne there,
 His nayles for anger gan to pare.

When he perceaved well,
 The newes was true to him was brought,
 Upon his knees he fell,
 And then Saint Peter he be sought,
 That he would stand his frend in this,
 To helpe to ayd those servauntes his,
 And he would do as much for him,
 But Peter sent him to Saint Simme.

So then he snuft,
 the Fryers all about he cuft,
 He roard he cryde,
 the preists they durst not once abide.

The Cardnalles they beginnes,
 To stay and take him in there arme,
 He spurnd them on the shinnes,



Away the trudgd for feare of harme.
So there the pope was left alone,
Good Lord how he dyd make his mone,
The Stooles against the Walles he threwe,
And me out of his nose he blewe.

I hopt I skipt,
From place to place about I whipt,
he swore he tare,
Till from his Crowne he pold the heare.

When I had vewed all,
To bring this newes my winges I spred,
to this parplict he is fall.
I wish some would go hold his head.
For certainly he doth yll fare,
yet for the same I do not care,
For God his power will convince,
And ayd with right his beloved prince.

then Pope radge thou,
The God in heaven hath made avowe,
to kepe all his,
That God is just our stay he is.

Finis.

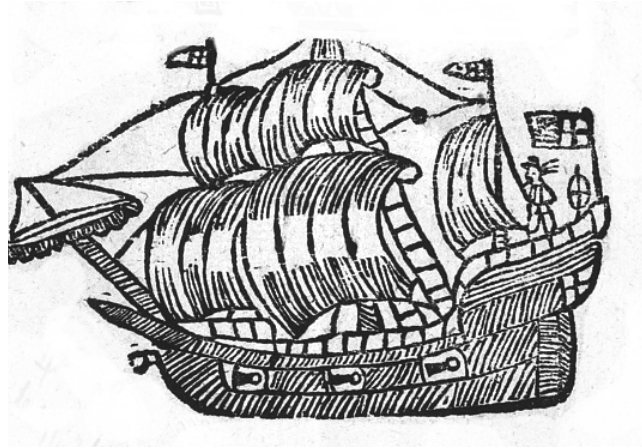
quod Thomas Preston.

Imprinted at London, in Fletestrete at
the signe of the Faulcon by Wyllyam
Gryffith, and are to be sold at his
shoppe in Sainte Dunstones
Churchyard. 1570.



The THAMES Uncas'd: OR, The Watermans Song upon the Thaw.

To the Tune of Hey Boys up go we.



1.

Come, ye merry men all
Of Watermans-hall,
Let's hoist out our Boats and careen;
The Thames it does melt,
And the Cold is scarce felt,
Not an Isicle's now to be seen.
Let's pull down each Skull
That hung up in Hall,
Like Weapon so rusty, and row:
Let's cheerly fall to't,
If we've not forgot;
For the Frost is over now.

2.

Let's set up our Masts
That stood like Posts,
As Props to our Tents on the Thames,
Or Signe-posts made,
With an Antient displai'd,
While our Oars were the great Cross-beams.

Let's hoise up our Sail
That was a side-Vail
To hide Doll when with Brandy she'd glow;
Or a Roof compos'd,
You might else have been froz'd,
Though the Frost be over now.

3.

We'll no longer stand
With a Tapsters hand,
With the Spigot in hand for an Oar,
Crying out, Our Trade is cold,
Here's four gallons in hold,
I have drawn out but half my store.
Prithee Lads stand to't,
And help pump it out,
That the Vessel once more may flow:
Then come again
With a thirsty Train;
But the Frost is over now.



10.

Had Thames been thaw'd,
 And Whale had tow'd
 Himself up by his Fin,
 They all had then,
 E'en as one man,
 Have hoop'd and hoop'd agen.
 Their Anchors shook,
 And spread with Hook,
 And made him stoop full low;
 T' other rural sport
 They care not for't;
 But the Frost is over now.

16.

We're freed now each Mate
 From the Care and Debate
 That attended us all so long,
 To determine Affairs
 Betwixt the two Stairs,
 Down which all the People throng.
 If you come once again,
 Take some other men,
 For the weight of it makes us to bow:
 E'en determine't yourselves,
 For your're quarrelsom Elves,
 And the Frost is over now.



17.

What a Pox made you meet
 To come here to cheat
 We Watermen of our Gain?
 Had ye kept in your Furs,
 We had voided these Stirs,
 And you of cold the pain.
 But to get your Coin
 You'd up to the Loin,
 Though your Arse should never thaw:
 Go get to your homes,
 And make whole your Bums,
 Since the Frost is over now.

18.

Mean time, if ought
 Of Honour you've got,
 Let the Printers have their due,
 Who printed your Names
 On the River Thames,
 While their hands with the cold look'd blue:
 There's mine, there's thine,
 Will for Ages shine,
 Now the Thames aloft does flow;
 Then let's gang hence
 To our Boats commence,
 For the Frost is over now.

The crost Couple, OR

A good Misfortune.

Which in a pleasant Ditty discovers, The fortunate cross of a couple of Lovers.
To a New Northern Tune, much in fashion.



Ille tell you a tale no stranger than true,
of a fa la la la la la
The sport ont is old, but the Sonnet is new
tis a fa la la etc
The story sprung from under a Bush
From a tongue & a tune as sweet as a thrush
But I fear it will make a fair Lady to blush
with a fa etc.
Nay do not turn your faces away
with a fa etc.
Heres nothing that can your Vertue betray
with a fa etc.
Let not your fancies look a squint,
The Author would never have put it in Print
If there had been any uncivil word int
but a fa etc.
I tell you no tales of Battels & fights
with a fa etc.
Of wonders of Monsters of Goblins or sprights,
with a fa etc.
Nor yet of a Thief that got a reprieve
I do not intend your spirits to grieve
My storys as old as Adam & Eve
with a fa etc.
I went to walk one Evening-tide
with a fa etc.

My fancy did lead me by a Woodside
with a fa etc.
Twas in the prime of all the spring
Which giveth delight to every thing,
I saw a Maid listen to hear a man sing
to her fa etc.
The tempting dressings that she was in
with a fa etc.
Would almost seduce a new Saint to the sin
with a fa etc.
She was a fair & lovely maid
About her wast his Arm he laid
The beautifulst baggage is soonest betraid
to a fa etc.
I got me strait up into a tree
with a fa etc.
Where I might see all, and no man see me
with a fa etc.
The tree was thick and full of growth
The top ont did hover so over them both
That if I had fell, I had dropt in her mouth
or her fa etc.
There many amorous glances they cast
with a fa etc.
But that was not all, the best is at last
with a fa etc.

Something it seems the youth would do
 Which she would not consent unto
 Have patience, & you shall know ere you go
with a fa etc.
 When laid on her side, she turnd to the tree
with her fa etc.
 I durst have sworn she had lookd upon me
with her fa etc.
 He many points of division did run
 But she cry'd out no, I shall be undone
 He tund up his pipes though, & thus he begun
to her fa etc.
 Oh come my own dear lets dally a while
with a fa etc.
 Thou hast quickend my spirits now with a smile
and thy fa etc.
 The trembling of thy lips do show
 Thou hast no power to say me no
 Which makes me have a moneths mind unto
thy fa etc.
 This hearty kisse is a sign thou wilt yield
to thy fa etc.
 The white of thy eyes speak peace in the field
with a fa etc.
 Then for a Vail to hide thy face
 Ile clod thee with a sweet embrace
 Theres many would wish that they were in thy
with their fa etc. [place
 Oh do not sigh to hear me intice,
with a fa etc.
 Thou ner hadst been got hath thy mother been nice
with her fa etc.
 Then prethee put me out of my pain
 For I am now in a merry vain
 Lets play at that game, where the losers do gain
with their fa etc.
 But oh my own dear why lyst thou so still
with thy fa etc.
 Art thou in a swound or what is thy will
with thy fa etc.
 I prethee joy take no such grief,
 Since I am so near to thy relief
 Oh let me play the amorous Thief
with thy fa etc.
 My dearest of all, why holdst thou so fast
with a fa etc

Ile swear we will marry if thou wilt make has[t]
with thy fa etc.
 Cupid doth give us leave to play
 Thy very blushes do betray
 That thou dost interpret what I have to say
with a fa etc.
 Then on her brow her vail she spread
with a fa etc.
 As if he had been going to cut off her head
with his fa etc.
 He with his Lips her mouth did wipe,
 And gave her many an earnest gripe
 For just now my Lady was yielding ripe
with her fa etc.
 In what a fret was I in the tree
with a fa etc.
 That I had not then another by me
with her fa etc.
 Then I perceivd they whisperd a while
 With many fair pleadings he did her beguile
 Sure something he shewd her which made her
with a fa etc. [smile,
 He said he was sure he could not be spyd
with a fa, etc.
 But I if I durst could have told him he lyd
with his fa etc.
 I feard I should be brought to light
 She so often cast up her Eyes so bright
 The pleasures of Love did so dazle her sight
and her fa etc.
 My Gamester could no longer forbear
her fa etc.
 No more should I if I had been there
by her fa etc.
 I turnd and served my body round,
 To see my gallant scale the Town
 But his getting up made me tumble down
with a fa etc
 Such was my fate, no mischief I had
with a fa etc.
 My Lovers both run as if theyd been mad
with their fa etc.
 And now I hope a warning twill be
 How they in such sinful pleasures agree
 For fear of the Devil that fell from the tree
with his fa la la la la la la.

A new Yorkshyre Song, Intituled:

Dorke, Dorke, for my monie: Of all the Citties that ever I see,
For mery pastime and companie, Except the Cittie of London.



AS I came thorow the Northcountry,
The fashions of the world to see,
I sought for mery companie,
To goe to the Cittie of London:
And when to the Cittie of Yorke I came,
I found good companie in the same,
As well disposed to every game,
as if it had been at London.

*Yorke, Yorke for my monie,
Of all the Citties that ever I soe,
For mery pastime and companie,
Except the Cittie of London.*

And in that Cittie what sawe I then:
Knightes, Squires, and Gentlemen,
A shooting went for Matches ten,
as if it had been at London.
And they shot for twentie poundes a Bowe,
Besides great cheere they did bestowe,
I never saw a gallanter showe,
except I had been at London.
Yorke, yorke, for my monie, etc.

These Matches you shall understande,
The Earle of Essex tooke in hand,
Against the good Earle of Cumberlande,
as if it had been at London.
And agreede these matches all shall be,

For pastime and good companie,
At the Cittie of Yorke full merily,
as if it had been at London.
Yorke, yorke, for my monie, etc.

God save our Queene, and keepe our peace
That our good shooting maie increase:
And praying to God, let us not cease,
as well at Yorke, as at London.
That all our Countrey round about,
May have Archers good to hit the Clout,
Which England cannot be without,
no more then Yorke and London.
Yorke, yorke, etc.

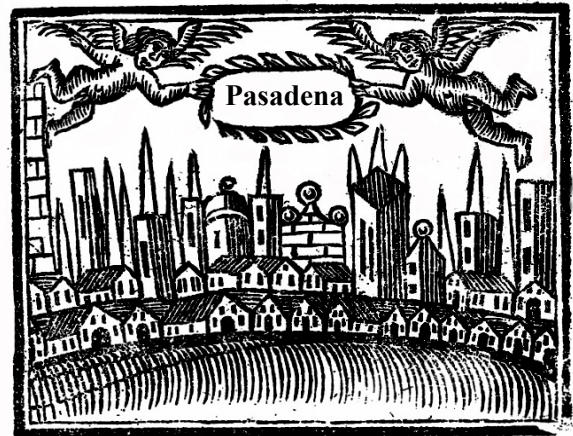
God graunt that (once) her Majestie,
Would come her Cittie of Yorke to see,
For the comfort great of that Countree,
as well as she doth to London.
Nothing shalbe thought to deare,
To see her Highnes Person there,
With such obedient love and feare,
as ever she had in London.

*Yorke, yorke, for my monie,
Of all the Citties that ever I see,
For mery pastime and companie,
Except the Cittie of London.*

A Digestif: The Conference on Ballads New Letany

Shewing some of the present dangers to the scholarly professions
and how the Living English Broadside Ballads conference
condened at the Huntington Library hath improved our appetite for study.

To the tune of the Black-smith, or Greensleeves



From scholarship dull and conferences bland
& plagues upon learning now rife in our land
Let us hope for deliverance,
good people at hand
Good *Jove* deliver us all

From Governments' funding for Science alone
Neglecting what humanist scholarship's known
How it's often by words
that a State's overthrown
Good *Jove* deliver us all

From archives shutting up stores in our face
Unlike *Huntington's* open beneficent grace
May all libraries follow
this excellent case
Good *Jove* deliver us all

Here Dolan and Nebeker showed ballads' *truth*
Smith, Skeaping, Clegg, & McShane have i'sooth
Brought ballads to life
(though God wot, some're uncouth!)
Good *Jove* deliver us all

Hailwood & Fox have talked nation and trades
Marsh and MPB have got woodcuts in spades
While Heaney and Stahmer
code a ballad web page
Good *Jove* deliver us all

With Brokaw's cohort we've chorused aloud
Conversed and debated as a jovial crowd
'Tis a pity that we
no more time are allowed
Good *Jove* deliver us all

To Sydney, London and Belfast we're bound
Edinburgh and Davis by air and on ground
So now let us remember
and savor this sound
Good night, good people all



Quod Charlotte Becker
After "The City of London's New Letany,"
Dwelling in Southehall at the Signe of the Ermine

