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Foreign Languages Faculty Department of English

Course work on Literature

English folk songs and ballads

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Plan :

I. Introduction.

About history of English folk songs and ballads.

II. Main part.

1. Forms of folk music: ballads, carols, children's songs, protest songs, war songs, work songs.
2. Regional traditions.
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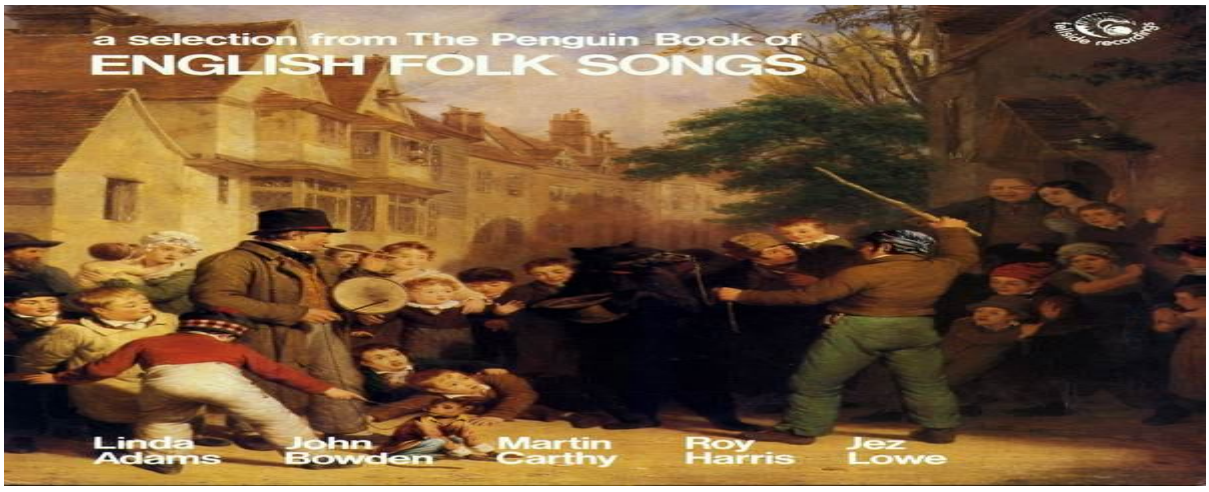
Introduction

Folk music of England refers to various types of traditionally based music, often contrasted with courtly, classical and later commercial music, for which evidence exists from the later medieval period. It has been preserved and transmitted orally, through print and later through recordings. The term is used to refer to English traditional music and music composed, or delivered, in a traditional style. English folk music has produced or contributed to several important musical genres, including sea shanties, jigs, hornpipes and dance music, such as that used for Morris dancing. It can be seen as having distinct regional and local variations in content and style, particularly in areas more removed from the cultural and political centres of the English state, as in Northumbria, or the West Country. Cultural interchange and processes of migration mean that English folk music, although in many ways distinctive, has particularly interacted with the music of Scotland, Ireland and Wales. It has also interacted with other musical traditions, particularly classical and rock music, influencing musical styles and producing musical fusions, such as electric folk, folk punk and folk metal. There remains a flourishing sub-culture of English folk music, which continues to influence other genres and occasionally to gain mainstream attention



In the strictest sense, English folk music has existed since the arrival of the Anglo-Saxon people in Britain after 400 CE. The Venerable Bede's story of the cattleman and later ecclesiastical musician Caedmon indicates that in the early medieval period it was normal at feasts to pass around the harp and sing 'vain and idle songs'. Since this type of music was rarely notated, we have little knowledge of its form or content. Some later tunes, like those used for Morris dance, may have their origins in this period, but it is impossible to be certain of these relationships. We know from a reference in William Langland's Piers Plowman, that ballads about Robin Hood were being sung from at least by the late 14th century and the oldest detailed material we have is Wynkyn de Worde's collection of Robin Hood ballads printed about 1495.

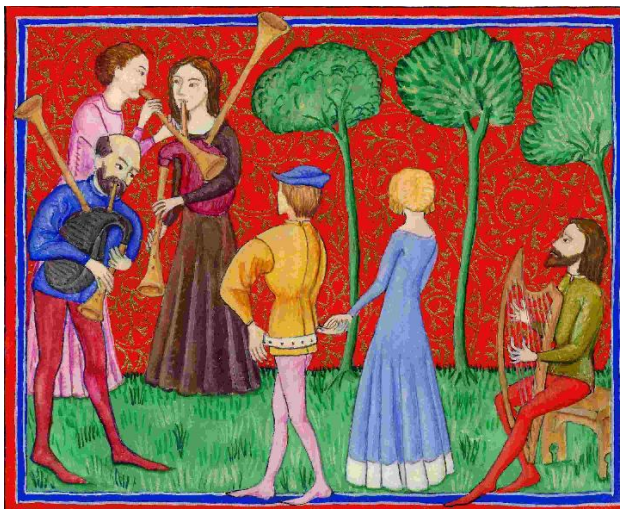
The 16th century to the 18th century

While there was distinct court music, members of the social elite into the 16th century also seem to have enjoyed, and even to have contributed to the music of the people, as Henry VIII perhaps did with the tavern song "Pastime with Good Company". Peter Burke argued that late medieval social elites had their own culture, but were culturally ‘amphibious', able to participate in and affect popular traditions.

In the 16th century the changes in the wealth and culture of the upper social orders caused tastes in music to diverge. There was an internationalisation of courtly music in terms of both instruments, such as the lute, dulcimer and early forms of the harpsichord, and in form with the development of madrigals, pavanes and galliards. For other social orders, instruments like the pipe, tabor, bagpipe, shawm, hurdy gurdy, and crumhorn accompanied traditional music and community dance. The fiddle, well established in England by the 1660s, was unusual in being a key element in both the art music that developed in the baroque, and in popular song and dance.

By the mid-17th century, the music of the lower social orders was sufficiently alien to the aristocracy and "middling sort" for a process of rediscovery to be needed in order to understand it, along with other aspects of popular culture such as festivals, folklore and dance. This led to a number of early collections of printed material, including those published by John Playford as The English Dancing Master (1651), and the private collections of Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) and the Roxburghe Ballads collected by Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford and Mortimer (1661–1724).

In the 18th century there were increasing numbers of collections of what was now beginning to be defined as "folk" music, strongly influenced by the Romantic movement, including Thomas D'Urfey's Wit and Mirth: or, Pills to Purge Melancholy (1719–20) and Bishop Thomas Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry (1765). The last of these also contained some oral material and by the end of the 18th century this was becoming increasingly common, with collections including John Ritson's, The Bishopric Garland (1784), which paralleled the work of figures like Robert Burns and Walter Scott in Scotland.



The early 19th century

With the Industrial Revolution the themes of the music of the labouring classes began to change from rural and agrarian life to include industrial work songs.

Awareness that older kinds of song were being abandoned prompted renewed interest in collecting folk songs during the 1830s and 1840s, including the work of William Sandys' Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern (1833), William Chappell, A Collection of National English Airs (1838) and Robert Bell's Ancient Poems, Ballads and Songs of the Peasantry of England (1846).

Technological change made new instruments available and led to the development of silver and brass bands, particularly in industrial centres in the north. The shift to urban centres also began to create new types of music, including from the 1850s the Music hall, which developed from performances in ale houses into theatres and became the dominant locus of English popular music for over a century. This combined with increased literacy and print to allow the creation of new songs that initially built on, but began to differ from traditional music as composers like Lionel Monckton and Sidney Jones created music that reflected new social circumstances.

Folk revivals 1890–1969

From the late 19th century there were a series of movements that attempted to collect, record, preserve and later to perform, English folk music and dance. These are usually separated into two folk revivals.

The first, in the later 19th and early 20th centuries, involved figures including collectors Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924), Frank Kidson (1855–1926), Lucy Broadwood (1858–1939), and Anne Gilchrist (1863–1954), centred around the Folk Song Society, founded in 1911. Francis James Child's (1825–96) eight-volume collection The English and Scottish Popular Ballads (1882–92) became the most influential in defining the repertoire of subsequent performers, and Cecil Sharp (1859–1924), founder of the English Folk Dance Society, was probably the most important figure in understanding of the nature of folk song. The revival was part of

a wider national movement in the period around the First World War, and contributed to the creation of a "national" or "pastoral" school of classical music which incorporated traditional songs or motifs, as can be seen in the compositions of Percy Grainger (1882–1961), Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872–1951), George Butterworth (1885–1916), Gustav Holst (1874–1934) and Frederick Delius (1862–1934). In 1932 the Folk-Song Society and the English Folk Dance Society merged to become the English Folk Dance and Song Society .

Forms of folk music

1.Ballads

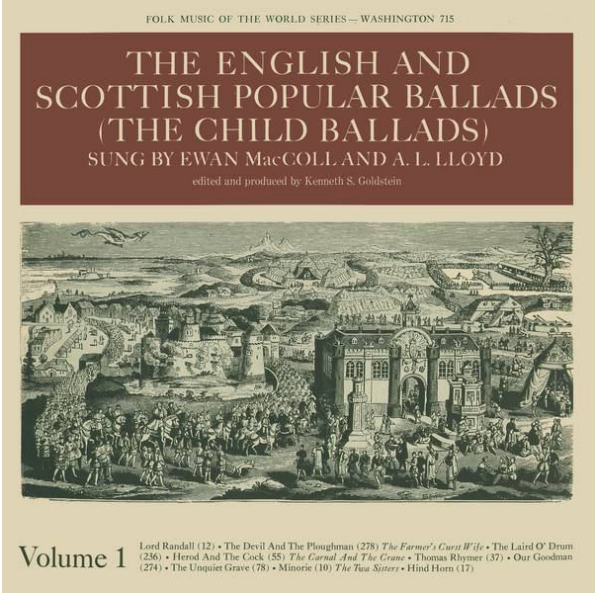
A ballad is a form of verse, often a narrative story and set to music. Many ballads were written and sold as single sheet broadsides. They are usually narrative in structure and make considerable use of repetition. The traditional ballad has been seen as originating with the wandering minstrels of late medieval Europe. There have been many different and contradictory attempts to classify traditional ballads by theme, but commonly identified types are religious, supernatural, tragic, love, historic, legends and humour.

2.Carols

A carol is a festive song, in modern times recognised as being exclusively associated with Christmas, but in reality there are carols celebrating all festivals and seasons of the year and not necessarily Christian festivals. They were derived from a form of circle dance accompanied by singers, which was popular from the mid-12th century. From the 14th century they were used as processional songs, particularly at Advent, Easter and Christmas, and to accompany religious mystery plays. They declined after

the Protestant Reformation which banned many religious festivals, but some famous carols were written in this period, including 'The Holly and the Ivy' and they were more strongly revived from the 19th century and began to be written and adapted by eminent composers.

3.Children's songs



The earliest vernacular children's songs in Europe are lullabies from the later medieval period. From soon after we have records of short children's rhyming songs, but most nursery rhymes were not written down until the 18th century. The first English collections were Tommy Thumb's Song Book and a sequel, Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book, are both thought to have been published before 1744, and John Newbery's, Mother Goose's Melody, or, Sonnets for the Cradle (c.1785), is the first record we have of many classic rhymes. These rhymes seem to have come from a variety of sources, including traditional riddles, proverbs, ballads, lines of Mummers' plays, drinking songs, historical events, and, it has been suggested, ancient pagan rituals. Roughly half of the current body recognised 'traditional' English rhymes were known by the mid-18th century. From this period we sometimes know the origins and authors of rhymes, like 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star', which combined an 18th-

century French tune with a poem by English writer Jane Taylor and 'Mary Had a Little Lamb', written by Sarah Josepha Hale of Boston in 1830. The first, and possibly the most important collection to focus in this area was, James Orchard Halliwell's, The Nursery Rhymes of England (1842) and Popular Rhymes and Tales in 1849. At the height of the revival Sabine Baring-Gould produced A Book of Nursery Songs (1895), and Andrew Lang produced The Nursery Rhyme Book in 1897. Children's songs, unlike folk songs, have remained part of a living and continuous tradition, for although added to from other sources and affected by written versions, most adults pass on songs they learned from oral sources as children.

4.Jigs

Jigs are a style of dance music developed in England to accompany a lively dance with steps, turns and leaps. The term jig was derived from the French 'giguer', meaning 'to jump'. It was known as a dance in the 16th century, often in 2/4 time and the term was used for a dancing entertainment in 16th century plays. The dance began to be associated with music particularly in 6/8 time, and with slip jigs 9/8 time. In the 17th century the dance was adopted in Ireland and Scotland, where they were widely adapted, and with which countries they are now most often associated. In some, usually more northern, parts of England, these dances would be referred to as a "Gallop" - such as the Winster Gallop from Derbyshire (though this owes its origins to the Winster Morris).

5.Morris dance

A morris dance is a type of English folk dance, usually accompanied by music, and based on rhythmic stepping and the execution of choreographed figures by a group of dancers, often using implements such as sticks, swords, and handkerchiefs. The name is thought to derive from the term 'moorish dance', for Spanish (Muslim) styles of dance and may derive from English court dances of the period. References have been found that suggest that morris dance dates back to the mid-15th century, but claims of pre-Christian origins are now largely dismissed.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_music_of_England_-_cite_note-Forrest1999-3#cite_note-Forrest1999-3 Morris dance appears to have been widespread in England by the early 17th century, particularly in pastoral areas, but was suppressed, along with associated festivals during and after the English Civil War. It recovered after the Restoration in 1660 but was in steep decline after agricultural and industrial revolutions by the 19th century, when collectors like Cecil Sharp recorded the practice, particularly from versions of dance he found in the Cotswolds. This led to a revival of the tradition, although it may also have affected form and practice. Morris dance took something of a back seat to unaccompanied singing in the second revival, but received a further boost when it attracted the attention of electric folk musicians like Ashley Hutchings, who produced several albums of dance music, including the influential Morris On series from 1972. Traditionally Morris dance was accompanied by either a pipe and tabor or a fiddle, but from the mid-19th century most common instruments were the melodeon, accordion, concertina and drums. Particularly in Cotswold and Border morris, many tunes are linked to particular dances. Morris dance survives in the distinct local traditions of Cotswold morris, north-west morris, Border Morris, rapper dance and Long Sword dance.

6.Protest songs

Perhaps the oldest clear example of an English protest song is the rhyme ‘When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman?’, used in the Peasants Revolt of 1381. Songs that celebrated social bandits like Robin Hood, from the 14th century onwards can be seen as a more subtle form of protest. With the Levellers and Diggers in the mid-17th century, more overt criticism surfaced, as in the ballad "The Diggers' Song". From roughly the same period, songs of protest at war, pointing out the costs to human lives, also begin to appear, like "The Maunding Souldier or The Fruits of Warre is Beggery", framed as a begging appeal from a crippled soldier of the Thirty Years War. With industrialisation from the 18th century. A surprising English folk hero immortalised in song is Napoleon Bonaparte, in songs such as the "Bonny Bunch of Roses" and "Napoleon’s Dream". As labour became more organised songs were used as anthems and propaganda, for miners with songs like "The Black Leg Miner", and for factory workers with songs like "The Factory Bell". These industrial protest songs were largely ignored during the first English folk revival of the later 19th and early 20th century, but were recorded by figures like A. L. Lloyd on albums such as The Iron Muse (1963). In the 1980s the anarchist rock band Chumbawamba recorded several versions of traditional English protest as English Rebel Songs 1381–1914. Ewan MacColl became the leading writer of English protest songs in the 1950s, with pro-communist songs such as "The Ballad of Ho Chi Minh" and "The Ballad of Stalin", as well as volatile protest and topical songs concerning the nuclear threat to peace, most notably "Against the Atom Bomb". The leading voice of protest in Thatcherite Britain in the 1980s was Billy Bragg, whose style of protest song and grass-roots political activism was mostly reminiscent of those of Woody Guthrie.

7.Sea shanties

Sea shanties are a type of work song traditionally sung by sailors. Derived from the French word 'chanter', meaning 'to sing', they may date from as early as the 15th century, but most recorded examples derive from the 19th century. Shanties were usually slow rhythmic songs designed to help with collective tasks on labour-intensive sailing and later steam ships. Many were call and response songs, with one voice (the shantyman) singing a lead line and the rest of the sailors giving a response together. There were derived from varied sources, including dances, folk songs, polkas, waltzes and even West African work-songs. Since different songs were useful for different tasks they are traditionally divided into three main categories, short haul shanties, for tasks requiring quick pulls over a relatively short time; halyard shanties, for heavier work requiring more set-up time between pulls; and Capstan shanties, for long, repetitive tasks requiring a sustained rhythm, but not involving working the lines. Famous shanties include, the 'Drunken Sailor' and 'Blow the Man Down'. There was some interest in sea shanties in the first revival from figures like Percy Grainger. In the second revival A. L. Lloyd attempted to popularise them, recording several albums of sea songs from 1965.

8.War songs

In England songs about military and naval subjects were a major part of the output of ballad writers from the 16th century onwards, including one of the earliest British ballads ‘The Ballad of Chevy Chase’, which deals with the events of the Scottish victory of the Battle of Otterburn in 1388 and may date to the early 15th century. The conflicts between England and Spain in the later 16th and early 17th centuries produced a number of ballads describing events, particularly naval conflicts like those of the Spanish Armada.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_music_of_England_-_cite_note-SolaPinto1957-79#cite_note-SolaPinto1957-79 The English Civil War (1642–1653) produced a

sub-genre of ‘Cavalier ballads’, including ‘When the King Home in Peace Again’. Many of these were adapted and reused by Jacobites after the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688. The Anglo-French Wars of the 17th and 18th centuries saw more descriptive works, usually couched in patriotic terms, but some, like ‘Captain Death’ (1757) dealt with loss and defeat. As regimental identities emerged songs were adopted for marching, like ‘The British Grenadiers’, based on a 17th-century dance tune. Output became a flood during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1797–1815), seeing numerous patriotic war songs, like ‘Heart of Oak’ and the emergence of a stereotype of the English seaman as ‘Jolly Jack Tar’, who appeared in many ballads and on stage. As the musical hall began to take over the lead in popular music and folk song declined, folk song ceased to deal with contemporary wars in the later 19th century.

9.Work songs

Work songs include music sung while conducting a task (often to coordinate timing) or a song linked to a task or trade which might be a connected narrative, description, or protest song. The two main types of work song in England are agricultural work songs, usually are rhythmic a cappella songs sung by people working on a physical and often repetitive task, like the 'Harvest song' common in south-west England. The songs were probably intended to increase productivity while reducing feelings of boredom. Rhythms of work songs can serve to synchronize physical movement in a group or gang. Industrial folk song emerged in Britain in the 18th century, as workers took the music with which they were familiar, including ballads and agricultural work songs, and adapted them to their new experiences and circumstances. Unlike agricultural work songs, it was often unnecessary to use music to synchronise actions between workers, as the pace would be increasingly determined by water, steam, chemical and eventually electric

power, and frequently impossible because of the noise of early industry.http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Folk_music_of_England - cite_note-97#cite_note-97 As a result, industrial folk songs tended to be descriptive of work, circumstances, or political in nature, making them amongst the earliest protest songs and were sung between work shifts or in leisure hours, rather than during work. This pattern can be seen in textile production, mining and eventually steel, shipbuilding, rail working and other industries.

Regional traditions

East Anglia

Despite enjoying relative geographical uniformity and history East Anglia is often seen as the region of England with the weakest attachment to regional identity, at least outside of the historical kingdom of East Anglia. Like many regions of England there are few distinctive local instruments and many songs were shared with the rest of Britain and with Ireland, although the distinct dialects of the regions sometimes lent them a particular stamp and, with one of the longest coastlines of any English region, songs about the sea were also particularly important. Along with the West Country, this was one of the regions that most firmly adopted reed instruments, producing many eminent practitioners of the melodeon from the mid-19th century. Also like the West Country it is one of the few regions where there is still an active tradition of step dancing and like the Midlands the tradition of Molly dance died out in the 1930s. The region was relatively neglected by folk song collectors of the first revival. Lucy Broadwood and Cecil Sharp collected in Cambridgeshire, as did and Vaughan Williams as well as in Norfolk and Essex from 1905, but most important regional figure was composer Ernest John Moeran, who collected over 150 songs in Norfolk and Suffolk in the 1920s. The second folk revival led to the discovery of many East Anglian folk musicians, including Suffolk melodeon

player Oscar Woods, Norfolk singers Sam Larner (1878–1965), Harry Cox (1885–1971) and Walter Pardon (1914–96); Suffolk fiddler Harkie Nesling (1890–1978); Suffolk singer and bargeman Bob Roberts (1907–82), many of whom recorded for Topic Records. Perhaps the most influential folk dance musical album was English Country Dance Music (1965), put together by Reg Hall and Bob Davenport with largely Norfolk musicians, it was the first instrumental recording of folk instruments. Also from Norfolk was Peter Bellamy, who in solo projects, with the Young Tradition and in theatrical productions was probably one of the most influential musicians of the post revival period. The Norfolk melodeon player and singer Tony Hall has given the tradition a unique style. East Anglia made a contribution to the electric folk scene of the 1970s, producing the short-lived, but more recently reformed, bands Midwinter and Stone Angel, based in Great Yarmouth and the more successful Spriguns of Tolgus from Cambridge, who produced four albums. The most successful folk artists from the region in recent years are probably the Essex born Billy Bragg and the Norfolk born Beth Orton. The region is home to numerous folk clubs and hosts many folk festivals, including Steeleye Span's Spanfest at Kentwell Hall, Suffolk and the Cambridge Folk Festival, generally seen as the most prestigious in the calendar. Since 2000 the East Anglian Traditional Music Trust has been promoting folk music in the region, organising a 'Traditional Music Day' every year in August.

The Midlands

Due to its lack of clear boundaries and a perceived lack of identity in its folk music, the English Midlands attracted relatively little interest in the early revivals. However in more recent years a distinct cultural heritage has been recognised including unique folk traditions and songs, many associated with the regions industrial connections. It has also produced a number of important performers and some particular local instruments, such as the Lincolnshire bagpipes, however the last

player, John Hunsley, died in the 19th century and no actual examples of the pipes have survived. From the 19th century the instruments used appear to have been much like those in other regions, with fiddles, accordions and eventually silver and brass. Although, some traditions, like Molly dance died out in the 1930s, the Midlands retained strong traditions of both ceremonial and social dance, particularly in the south Midlands and Cotswolds and in the distinctive Border Morris from Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire. The region also furnished some important material for folk songs, including a claim by Nottinghamshire for one of the most popular series of ballads, that of Robin Hood, while local places appear in songs such as 'The Leicester Chambermaid' and 'Oxford' or 'Worcester City'. Folk song collecting in the first revival was much less comprehensive than for many other regions. In the 1860s Llewellynn Jewitt, collected songs from Derbyshire, and some songs were printed by Georgina F. Jackson in her study of Shropshire folk lore. Cecil Sharp's interest in the region was largely confined to the south, particularly the Cotswold morris villages of Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, which provided him with an archetype of English ceremonial dance. From 1905 Percy Grainger was actively collecting in Lincolnshire, acquiring recordings of songs that would provide the basis for his Lincolnshire Posy (1937). It was not until the early 1970s that the broader heritage of the region, including the many industrial and work songs associated with mining or The Potteries, began to gain serious attention. Despite this neglect there was an active folk scene in the region, which produced several key artists of the second revival from the 1960s, including Anne Briggs from Nottinghamshire, The Settlers from the West Midlands and from Birmingham one of the most influential groups of the period, the Ian Campbell Folk Group, which numbered among its members later electric folk musicians Dave Swarbrick and Dave Pegg. Slightly later a number of folk groups came out of Derbyshire, including The Druids, Ram's Bottom Band and Muckram Wakes, which included one of the most highly regarded modern performers John Tams. Lincolnshire has produced Martin Simpson, perhaps the

most highly regarded folk guitarist of his generation. Birmingham's position as a centre for folk music has been emphasised by its place as the home of the Birmingham Conservatoire Folk Ensemble, led by former Albion Band fiddler Joe Broughton, which provides something of a clearing house of promising young folk musicians. The regions has numerous folk clubs and host many major folk festivals, including those of Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, Loughborough in Leicestershire, Shrewsbury in Shropshire, Warwick and Moseley.

The North West

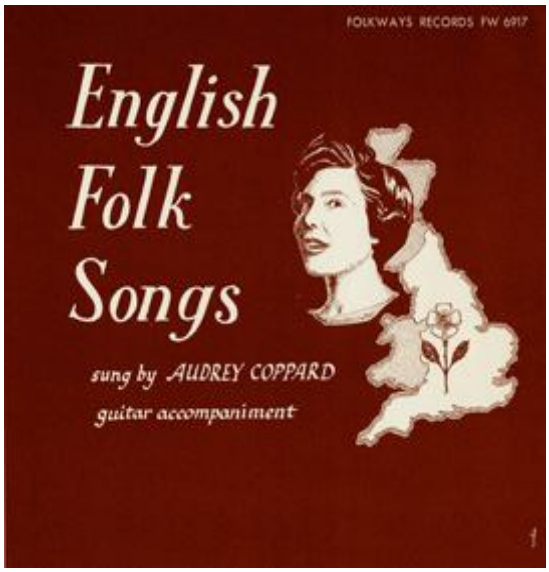
Although relatively neglected in the first folk revival North West England had a rich tradition of balladry stretching back at least to the 17th century and sharing in the tradition of Border ballads, including perhaps the finest 'The Ballad of Chevy Chase', thought to have been composed by the Lancashire born minstrel Richard Sheale. Lancashire in particular was a common location for folk songs, including 'The Lancashire Miller', 'Warrington Ale' and 'The soldier's farewell to Manchester', beside several local Wassailing songs. With a variety of dialects and acting as something of a crossroads for the cultures and immigrants of England, Scotland and Ireland, there is a distinctive local character to folk music, which expressed itself in local enthusiasm that emerged as a major factor within the wider folk movement in the second revival. The key event in the history of folk music in the counties of the north west of England was the Industrial Revolution, which divided the region economically and culturally into a northern, often highland and pastoral region, in Westmorland and Cumberland and a more urbanised and industrialised southern zone with large and growing conurbations like Manchester and Liverpool, where changing social and economic patterns emerged in new traditions and styles of folk song, often linked to migration and patterns of work, these included processional dances, often associated with rushbearing and the Wakes Week festivities and types

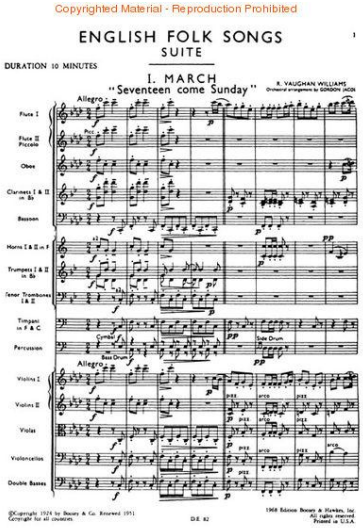
of step dance, most famously clog dancing. These were very different from the styles of dance that collectors like Cecil Sharp had encountered in the Cotswolds and were largely dismissed by him as contaminated by urbanisation, yet they were, and remain, a thriving tradition of music and dance. A local pioneer of folk song collection in the first half of the 19th century in Lancashire was Shakespearian scholar James Orchard Halliwell, and he was followed a little later by John Harland, William E. Axon, Thomas T. Wilkinson and Sidney Gilpin, who performed a similar service for Cumberland. Most of these works, although important in unearthing, and in some cases preserving, locally relevant ballads, largely depended on manuscript sources, rather than oral collection and often did not give tunes, but only lyrics. It was not until the second folk revival that the full range of song from the region began to gain attention. The region not only produced one of the major figures of the revival in Ewan MacColl but also a local champion in Harry Boardman, who from 1965 onwards probably did more than anyone to popularise and record the industrial folk song of the region, in several albums and books. The region produced no significant bands in the electric folk movement of the 1970s but can claim one of the most significant figures, as Maddy Prior was brought up in Blackpool. However, perhaps the most influential folk artists to emerge from the region in this period were folk troubadour Roy Harper and comedian and broadcaster Mike Harding. More recently it has produced some significant performers including guitarist Ken Nicol and mother and daughter singer songwriters Chris and Kellie While. The region is home to numerous folk clubs, many of them catering to Irish and Scots folk. Folk festivals include the Fylde Folk Festival at Fleetwood in Lancashire.

Northumbria

Northumbria possesses a distinctive style of folk music with a flourishing and continuing tradition. The region is particularly noted for the unique Northumbrian

smallpipes and strong fiddle tradition that was already well-established in the 1690s. Northumbrian music is characterised by considerable influence from other regions, particularly southern Scotland, other parts of the north of England and Ireland. Local tunes were collected from the mid-18th century by figures including Henry Atkinson and William Vickers and in the first revival by John Bell, Bruce. J. Collingwood and John Stokoe. The Northumbrian Small Pipes Society was founded in Newcastle in 1893 and the Northumbrian Pipers' Society in 1928, and they are generally credited with keeping the distinctive tradition alive. Border ballads were a major part of those collected by Francis James Child and make up most of the sixth volume of his ten volume collection of The English and Scottish Popular Ballads (1882–98). The second folk revival saw a number of acts drawing on this work, and enjoying some success. Probably the most influential piper at that time was Billy Pigg. Performers such Louis Killen, The High Level Ranters and Bob Davenport brought Northumbrian folk to national and international audiences. The 1970s saw folk rock bands like Lindisfarne, and the more traditionally focused Jack the Lad and Hedgehog Pie. More recently, Northumbrian folk music, and particularly the use of the Northumbrian pipes, has become one of the liveliest and most widely known subgenres of folk music in Britain, with artists like fiddler Nancy Kerr, piper Kathryn Tickell and Rachel Unthank and the Winterset gaining international reputations. Currently the region has over thirty active folk clubs and hosts several major folk festivals, including the Traditional Music Festival at Rothbury.





ENGLISH FOLK SONGS
SUITE
DURATION 10 MINUTES
I. MARCH
"Seventeen come Sunday"
R. VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

The South East

Even excluding Sussex and London, South-east England has been one of the key areas of English folk music and collection. It had retained a strong tradition of wassailing, and seafaring songs were important in the coastal counties of Kent and Hampshire. Arguably the published collection of oral material was made in this area by John Broadwood, as Old English Songs, As Now Sung by the Peasantry of the Weald of Surrey and Sussex (1843). When the first revival was at its height in the first decade of the 20th century, George Gardiner and Alice Gillington both collected songs in Hampshire, Lucy Broadwood in Surrey, Hampshire and Oxfordshire, Alfred Williams in Oxfordshire and Berkshire and Cecil Sharp in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Kent. In the second folk revival the region contributed several figures, with probably the most important being Martin Carthy from Hertfordshire. The most significant electric folk group from the region were the Oyster Band, formed in Canterbury, while guitarist John Martyn came from Surrey and fiddle player Chris Leslie from Banbury in Oxfordshire. From the current crop of young folk musicians probably the most prominent are Spiers and Boden from Oxfordshire and Chris Wood, born in Kent. The region is host to numerous folk clubs, and festivals,

including the Oxford festival and Fairport's Cropredy Convention in Oxfordshire and St Albans in Hertfordshire.

London

Despite being the centre of both folk revivals and the electric folk movement, the songs of London were largely neglected in favour of regional and rural music until relatively recently. London, unsurprisingly, was the most common location mentioned in English folk songs, including 'London is a Fine Town', and the 'London Prentice' and it was the centre of the broadside publishing industry. From the 17th century to the 19th, street singers were characteristic of London life, often selling printed versions of the songs they sung. The capital was home to the Folk-Song Society and the English Folk Dance Society from the late 19th century, but the most distinctive genre of London music, its many street cries, were not considered folk music by mainstream collectors and were recorded and published by figures such as Andrew White in Old London Street Cries ; and, The Cries of To-day (1885). Both Ewan MacColl and A. L. Lloyd gravitated to London in the 1950s, it was the base of Topic Records and it was there that the first folk clubs were formed before they spread out across the country. It was also the home of folk musicians like Ashley Hutchings, Richard Thompson and Simon Nicol who formed Fairport Convention, and many artists, like Bert Jansch and Davy Graham, moved there in order to be able to pursue their careers or for the greater networks and opportunities the capital allowed. More recent performers of folk music include Noah and the Whale, Emma Lee Moss, Mumford and Sons and The Border Surrender.

Sussex

Sussex has had an impact on the history of English folk music disproportionate to its size. This was due to a flourishing tradition of folk dance, mummers plays and folk

song, but also in part because of the rural nature of the county in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and yet its relatively close proximity to London. It was thus a rich and convenient place for the for collectors of the first folk song revival, including Kate Lee, Lucy Broadwood and W. P. Merrick. Sussex material was used by the composers of the English pastoral school, for example in Percy Grainger's arrangement of the 'The Sussex Mummers' Christmas Carol', Ralph Vaughan Williams' use of the tune 'Monk's Gate' as a setting for John Bunyan's 'To be a Pilgrim' and George Butterworth's arrangement of 'Folk Songs from Sussex'. Most important of the collector's sources were the Copper Family of Rottingdean, who emerged as authorities on folk song and eventually as major recording artists. Sussex folk song also had a formative impact on one of the major figures of the second revival, as it was as a child of five in Sussex that A. L. Lloyd first heard folk music. Other performers include Scan Tester, Henry Burstow and the sisters Dolly and Shirley Collins. Sussex songs were also the foundation of the repertoire of the influential Young Tradition. The county has over twenty folk clubs and other venues hosting folk music by organisations such as Acoustic Sussex. There are also annual folk music festivals at Eastbourne, Crawley and Lewes.

The West Country

Cornwall

The music of Cornwall is often noted for its similarity to that of Brittany and, as a result of the close physical and cultural ties between the two peninsulas, some older songs and carols share the same root as Breton tunes. From the late Middle Ages the fiddle (crowd in Cornish), bombarde (horn-pipe), bagpipes and harp all seem to have been used in music. The Cornish bagpipes died out, as elsewhere in southern England, in the 16th century, but have recently been re-created. From the mid-19th century accordions became progressively more popular as a folk instrument in the

county, as in the rest of the West Country. There is long and varied history of Cornish dance from the medieval period, with records of strong traditions of morris dancing, mumming, guising, and social dance. These seem to have been interrupted by the Reformation and Civil War and Commonwealth in the 16th and 17th centuries. However, there was revival from the late 18th century and seasonal and community festivals, mumming and guising all flourished. In the 19th century a strong tradition of nonconformity and temperance may also have affected dancing and music adversely and encouraged choral and brass band movements, while traditional tunes were used for carols. Some community events survived, such as the 'Obby 'Oss festival in Padstow and the Furry Dance in Helston. Folk songs include ‘Sweet Nightingale’, ‘Little Eyes’, and ‘Lamorna’. 'Trelawny' is often sung at sporting events and is seen by many as an unofficial anthem. Few traditional Cornish lyrics survived the decline of the language, but in some cases lyrics of common English songs became attached to older Cornish tunes. Some folk tunes have Cornish lyrics written since the language revival of the 1920s. Modern Cornish musicians include the former Cornish folk singer Brenda Wootton and the Cornish-Breton family band Anao Atao. Recently bands like Sacred Turf, Skwardya and Krena, have begun performing electric folk in the Cornish language. The Cornwall Folk Festival has been held annually for more than three decades.

The rest of the West Country

Outside Devon and Cornwall Celtic influence on music in the West Country is much less obvious, but folk music still retains many distinctive local characteristics. As in Cornwall there are very strong traditions of folk dance and mumming, the best known being the Hobby horse celebrations at Minehead in Somerset. The maritime heritage of Devon made sea shanties, hornpipes and naval or sea ballads important parts of regional folk music. From the 19th century accordions have been a popular

and accepted part of the local folk sound. Folk songs from the West Country include ‘Widdecombe Fair’, ‘Spanish Ladies’ and ‘The Seeds of Love.’ The region was important in the first folk revival, as the Devon-born antiquarian Sabine Baring-Gould invested effort in collecting regional music, published as Songs and Ballads of the West (1889–91), the first collection published for the mass market. He later collaborated with Cecil Sharp who, with Charles Marson, produced a three volume Folk-Songs from Somerset (1904–09). Other collectors included Henry and Robert Hammond in Dorset, the Reverend Geoffrey Hill in Wiltshire, Percy Grainger in Gloucestershire and, perhaps the most famous, Ralph Vaughan Williams' 'Folk Songs from Somerset', which provided themes for his English Folk Song Suite. In the second folk revival the most famous West country musicians were melodeon-player Bob Cann and writer, performer and broadcaster Cyril Tawney, 'The Father of the West Country Folk Revival'. In the 1970s there were figures such as Tony Rose. The same period saw one of the most surprising hybrids in music history Scrumpy and Western with bands like the Wurzels and The Yetties, who took most of the elements of West Country folk music for comical folk-style songs with affectionate parodies of more mainstream musical genres, delivered in local West Country dialects. More seriously, the West Country and particularly Devon, have produced some of the most successful folk artists of recent years, including Show of Hands, Mark Bazeley and Jason Rice, Paul Downes, Jim Causley, Seth Lakeman and his brothers. The region has numerous folk clubs and annual festivals, including those at Portsmouth and the first modern English folk festival to be established at Sidmouth in Devon.

Yorkshire

Yorkshire has a rich heritage of folk music and folk dance including the Long Sword dance. Folk songs were collected there from the 19th century but, though it

probably had more attention than other northern counties, its rich heritage of industrial folk song was relatively neglected. It was not until the second revival in the 1950s that Nigel and Mary Hudleston began to attempt to redress the balance, collecting Yorkshire songs between 1958 and 1978. Yorkshire folk song lacked the unique instrumental features of folk in areas like Northumbria and was chiefly distinguished by the use of dialect, particularly in the West Riding and exemplified by the song ‘On Ilkla Moor Baht 'at’, probably written in the later 19th century and using a Kent folk tune (almost certainly borrowed via a Methodist hymnal), but often seen as an unofficial Yorkshire anthem. Most Yorkshire folk songs were not unique and tended to be adapted to fit local geography and dialect, as was the case with probably the most commercially successful Yorkshire song, ‘Scarborough Fair’, recorded by Simon & Garfunkel, which was a version of the Scottish ballad ‘The Elfin Knight’. The most famous folk performers from the county are the Watersons from Hull, who began recording Yorkshire versions of folk songs from 1965. Other Yorkshire folk musicians include Heather Wood (born 1945) of the Young Tradition, the short-lived electric folk group Mr Fox (1970-2), The Deighton Family, Julie Matthews, Kathryn Roberts, and the Mercury Prize nominated Kate Rusby. Even considering its position as the largest county in England, Yorkshire has a flourishing folk music culture, with over forty folk clubs and thirty annual folk music festivals. In 2007, the Yorkshire Garland Group was formed to make Yorkshire folk songs accessible online and in schools.

Old English ballads

Goethe, who saw so many things with such clearness of vision, brought out the charm of the popular ballad for readers of a later day in his remark that the value of these songs of the people is to be found in the fact that their motives are drawn directly from nature; and he added, that in the art of saying things compactly, uneducated men have greater skill than those who are educated. It is certainly true that no kind of verse is so completely out of the atmosphere of modern writing as the popular ballad. No other form of verse has, therefore, in so great a degree, the charm of freshness. In material, treatment, and spirit, these bat lads are set in sharp contrast with the poetry of the hour. They deal with historical events or incidents, with local traditions, with personal adventure or achievement. They are, almost without exception, entirely objective. Contemporary poetry is, on the other hand, very largely subjective; and even when it deals with events or incidents it invests them to such a degree with personal emotion and imagination, it so modifies and colours them with temperamental effects, that the resulting poem is much more a study of subjective conditions than a picture or drama of objective realities. This projection of the inward upon the outward world, in such a degree that the dividing line between the two is lost, is strikingly illustrated in Maeterlinck's plays. Nothing could be in sharper contrast, for instance, than the famous ballad of "The Hunting of

the Cheviot" and Maeterlinck's "Princess Maleine." There is no atmosphere, in a strict use of the word, in the spirited and compact account of the famous contention between the Percies and the Douglases, of which Sir Philip Sidney said "that I found not my heart moved more than with a Trumpet." It is a breathless, rushing narrative of a swift succession of events, told with the most straight-forward simplicity. In the "Princess Maleine," on the other hand, the narrative is so charged with subjective feeling, the world in which the action takes place is so deeply tinged with lights that never rested on any actual landscape, that all sense of reality is lost. The play depends for its effect mainly upon atmosphere. Certain very definite impressions are produced with singular power, but there is no clear, clean stamping of occurrences on the mind. The imagination is skilfully awakened and made to do the work of observation.

The note of the popular ballad is its objectivity; it not only takes us out of doors, but it also takes us out of the individual consciousness. The manner is entirely subordinated to the matter; the poet, if there was a poet in the case, obliterates himself. What we get is a definite report of events which have taken place, not a study of a man's mind nor an account of a man's feelings. The true balladist is never introspective; he is concerned not with himself but with his story. There is no self-disclosure in his song. To the mood of Senancour and Amiel he was a stranger. Neither he nor the men to whom he recited or sang would have understood that mood. They were primarily and unreflectively absorbed in the world outside of themselves. They saw far more than they meditated; they recorded far more than they moralized. The popular ballads are, as a rule, entirely free from didacticism in any form; that is one of the main sources of their unfailing charm. They show not only a childlike curiosity about the doings of the day and the things that befall men, but a childlike indifference to moral inference and justification. The bloodier the fray the better for ballad purposes; no one feels the necessity of apology either for

ruthless aggression or for useless blood-letting; the scene is reported as it was presented to the eye of the spectator, not to his moralizing faculty. He is expected to see and to sing, not to scrutinize and meditate. In those rare cases in which a moral inference is drawn, it is always so obvious and elementary that it gives the impression of having been fastened on at the end of the song, in deference to ecclesiastical rather than popular feeling.

The social and intellectual conditions which fostered self-unconsciousness,—interest in things, incidents, and adventures rather than in moods and inward experiences,—and the unmoral or non moralizing attitude towards events, fostered also that delightful naivete which contributes greatly to the charm of many of the best ballads; a naivete which often heightens the pathos, and, at times, softens it with touches of apparently unconscious humour; the naivete of the child which has in it something of the freshness of a wildflower, and yet has also a wonderful instinct for making the heart of the matter plain. This quality has almost entirely disappeared from contemporary verse among cultivated races; one must go to the peasants of remote parts of the Continent to discover even a trace of its presence. It has a real, but short-lived charm, like the freshness which shines on meadow and garden in the brief dawn which hastens on to day.

This frank, direct play of thought and feeling on an incident, or series of incidents, compensates for the absence of a more perfect art in the ballads; using the word "art" in its true sense as including complete, adequate, and beautiful handling of subject-matter, and masterly working out of its possibilities. These popular songs, so dear to the hearts of the generations on whose lips they were fashioned, and to all who care for the fresh note, the direct word, the unrestrained emotion, rarely touch the highest points of poetic achievement. Their charm lies, not in their perfection of form, but in their spontaneity, sincerity, and graphic power. They are not rivers of

song, wide, deep, and swift; they are rather cool, clear springs among the hills. In the reactions against sophisticated poetry which set in from lime to time, the popular ballad—the true folk-song—has often been exalted at the expense of other forms of verse. It is idle to attempt to arrange the various forms of poetry in an order of absolute values; it is enough that each has its own quality, and, therefore, its own value. The drama, the epic, the ballad, the lyric, each strikes its note in the complete expression of human emotion and experience. Each belongs to a particular stage of development, and each has the authority and the enduring charm which attach to every authentic utterance of the spirit of man under the conditions of life.

In this wide range of human expression the ballad follows the epic as a kind of aftermath; a second and scattered harvest, springing without regularity or nurture out of a rich and unexhausted soil. The epic fastens upon some event of such commanding importance that it marks a main current of history; some story, historic, or mythologic; some incident susceptible of extended narrative treatment. It is always, in its popular form, a matter of growth it is direct, simple, free from didacticism; representing, as Aristotle says, "a single action, entire and complete." It subordinates character to action; it delights in episode and dialogue; it is content to tell the story as a story, and leave the moralization to hearers or readers. The popular ballad is so closely related to the popular epic that it may be said to reproduce its qualities and characteristics within a narrower compass, and on a smaller scale. It also is a piece of the memory of the people, or a creation of the imagination of the people; but the tradition or fact which it preserves is of local, rather than national importance. It is indifferent to nice distinctions and delicate gradations or shadings; its power springs from its directness, vigour, and simplicity. It is often entirely occupied with the narration or description of a single episode; it has no room for dialogue, but it often secures the effect of the dialogue by its unconventional freedom of phrase, and sometimes by the introduction of brief and

compact charge and denial, question and reply. Sometimes the incidents upon which the ballad makers fastened, have a unity or connection with each other which hints at a complete story. The ballads which deal with Robin Hood are so numerous and so closely related that they constantly suggest, not only the possibility, but the probability of epic treatment. It is surprising that the richness of the material, and its notable illustrative quality, did not inspire some earlier Chaucer to combine the incidents in a sustained narrative. But the epic poet did not appear, and the most representative of English popular heroes remains the central figure in a series of detached episodes and adventures, preserved in a long line of disconnected ballads.

This apparent arrest, in the ballad stage, of a story which seemed destined to become an epic, naturally suggests the vexed question of the author ship of the popular ballads. They are in a very real sense the songs of the people; they make no claim to individual authorship; on the contrary, the inference of what may be called community authorship is, in many instances, irresistible. They are the product of a social condition which, so to speak, holds song of this kind in solution; of an age in which improvisation, singing, and dancing are the most natural and familiar forms of expression. They deal almost without exception with matters which belong to the community memory or imagination; they constantly reappear with variations so noticeable as to indicate free and common handling of themes of wide local interest. All this is true of the popular ballad; but all this does not decisively settle the question of authorship. What share did the community have in the making of these songs, and what share fell to individual singers?

Herder, whose conception of the origin and function of literature was so vitalizing in the general aridity of thinking about the middle of the last century, and who did even more for ballad verse in Germany than Bishop Percy did in England, laid emphasis almost exclusively on community authorship. His profound instinct for

reality in all forms of art, his deep feeling for life, and the immense importance he attached to spontaneity and unconsciousness in the truest productivity made community authorship not only attractive but inevitable to him. In his pronounced reaction against the superficial ideas of literature so widely held in the Germany of his time, he espoused the conception of community authorship as the only possible explanation of the epics, ballads, and other folk-songs. In nature and popular life, or universal experience, he found the rich sources of the poetry whose charm he felt so deeply, and whose power and beauty he did so much to reveal to his contemporaries. Genius and nature are magical words with him, because they suggested such depths of being under all forms of expression; such unity of the whole being of a race in its thought, its emotion, and its action; such entire unconsciousness of self or of formulated aim, and such spontaneity of spirit and speech. The language of those times, when words had not yet been divided into nobles, middle-class, and plebeians, was, he said, the richest for poetical purposes. "Our tongue, compared with the idiom of the savage, seems adapted rather for reflection than for the senses or imagination. The rhythm of popular verse is so delicate, so rapid, so precise, that it is no easy matter to defect it with our eyes; but do not imagine it to have been equally difficult for those living populations who listened to, instead of reading it; who were accustomed to the sound of it from their infancy; who themselves sang it, and whose ear had been formed by its cadence." This conception of poetry as arising in the hearts of the people and taking form on their lips is still more definitely and strikingly expressed in two sentences, which let us into, the heart of Herder's philosophy of poetry: "Poetry in those happy days lived in the ears of the people, on the lips and in the harps of living bards; it sang of history, of the events of the day, of mysteries, miracles, and signs. It was the flower of a nation's character, language, and country; of its occupations, its prejudices, its passions, its aspirations, and its soul." In these words, at once comprehensive and vague, after the manner of Herder, we find ourselves face to face with that

conception not only of popular song in all its forms, but with literature as a whole, which has revolutionized literary study in this century, and revitalized it as well. For Herder was a man of prophetic instinct; he sometimes felt more clearly than he saw; he divined where he could not reach results by analysis. He was often vague, fragmentary, and inconclusive, like all men of his type; but he had a genius for getting at the heart of things. His statements often need qualification, but he is almost always on the tight track. When he says that the great traditions, in which both the memory and the imagination of a race were engaged, and which were still living in the mouths of the people, "of themselves took on poetic form," he is using language which is too general to convey a definite impression of method, but he is probably suggesting the deepest truth with regard to these popular stories. They actually were of community origin; they actually were common property; they were given a great variety of forms by a great number of persons; the forms which have come down to us are very likely the survivors of a kind of in formal competition, which went on for years at the fireside and at the festivals of a whole country side.

Barger, whose "Lenore" is one of the most widely known of modern ballads, held the same view of the origin of popular song, and was even more definite in his confession of faith than Herder. He declared in the most uncompromising terms that all real poetry must have a popular origin; "can be and must be of the people, for that is the seal of its perfection." And he comments on the delight with which he has listened, in village street and home, to unwritten songs; the poetry which finds its way in quiet rivulets to the remotest peasant home. In like manner, Helene Vacaresco overheard the songs of the Roumanian people; hiding in the maize to catch the reaping songs; listening at spinning parties, at festivals, at death-beds, at taverns; taking the songs down from the lips of peasant women, fortune-tellers, gypsies, and all manner of humble folk who were the custodians of this vagrant community verse. We have passed so entirely out of the song-making period, and

literature has become to us so exclusively the work of a professional class, that we find it difficult to imagine the intellectual and social conditions which fostered improvisation on a great scale, and trained the ear of great populations to the music of spoken poetry. It is almost impossible for us to disassociate literature from writing. There is still, however, a considerable volume of unwritten literature in the world in the form of stories, songs, proverbs, and pithy phrases; a literature handed down in large part from earlier times, but still receiving additions from contemporary men and women.

This unwritten literature is to be found, it is hardly necessary to say, almost exclusively among country people remote from towns, and whose mental attitude and community feeling reproduce, in a way, the conditions under which the English and Scotch ballads were originally composed. The Roumanian peasants sing their songs upon every occasion of domestic or local interest; and sowing and harvesting, birth, christening, marriage, the burial, these notable events in the life of the country side are all celebrated by unknown poets; or, rather, by improvisers who give definite form to sentiments, phrases, and words which are on many lips. The Russian peasant tells his stories as they were told to him; those heroic epics whose life is believed, in some cases, to date back at least a thousand years. These great popular stories form a kind of sacred inheritance bequeathed by one generation to another as a possession of the memory, and are almost entirely unrelated to the written literature of the country. Miss Hapgood tells a very interesting story of a government official, stationed on the western shore of Lake Onega, who became so absorbed in the search for this literature of the people that he followed singers and reciters from place to place, eager to learn from their lips the most widely known of these folk tales. On such an expedition of discovery he found himself, one stormy night, on an island in the lake. The hut of refuge was already full of stormbound peasants when he entered. Having made himself some tea, and spread his blanket in

a vacant place, he fell asleep. He was presently awakened by a murmur of recurring sounds. Sitting up, he found the group of peasants hanging on the words of an old man, of kindly face, expressive eyes, and melodious voice, from whose lips flowed a marvellous song; grave and gay by turns, monotonous and passionate in succession; but wonderfully fresh, picturesque, and fascinating. The listener soon became aware that he was hearing, for the first time, the famous story of "Sadko, the Merchant of Novgorod." It was like being present at the birth of a piece of literature!

The fact that unwritten songs and stories still exist in great numbers among remote country-folk of our own time, and that additions are still made to them, help us to understand the probable origin of our own popular ballads, and what community authorship may really mean. To put ourselves, even in thought, in touch with the ballad-making period in English and Scotch history, we must dismiss from our minds all modern ideas of authorship; all notions of individual origination and ownership of any form of words. Professor ten Brink tells us that in the ballad-making age there was no production; there was only reproduction. There was a stock of traditions, memories, experiences, held in common by large populations, in constant use on the lips of numberless persons; told and retold in many forms, with countless changes, variations, and modifications; without conscious artistic purpose, with no sense of personal control or possession, with no constructive aim either in plot or treatment; no composition in the modern sense of the term. Such a mass of poetic material in the possession of a large community was, in a sense, fluid, and ran into a thousand forms almost without direction or premeditation. Constant use of such rich material gave a poetic turn of thought and speech to countless persons who, under other conditions, would have given no sign of the possession of the faculty of imagination.

There was not only the stimulus to the faculty which sees events and occurrences with the eyes of the imagination, but there was also constant and familiar use of the language of poetry. To speak metrically or rhythmically is no difficult matter if one is in the atmosphere or habit of verse-making; and there is nothing surprising either in the feats of memory or of improvisation performed by the minstrels and balladists of the old time. The faculty of improvising was easily developed and was very generally used by people of all classes. This facility is still possessed by rural populations, among whom songs are still composed as they are sting, each member of the company contributing a new verse or a variation, suggested by local conditions, of a well-known stanza. When to the possession of a mass of traditions and stories and of facility of improvisation is added the habit of singing and dancing, it is not difficult to reconstruct in our own thought the conditions under which popular poetry came into being, nor to understand in what sense a community can make its own songs. In the brave days when ballads were made, the rustic peoples were not mute, as they are to-day; nor sad, as they have become in so many parts of England. They sang and they danced by instinct and as an expression of social feeling. Originally the ballads were not only sung, but they gave measure to the dance; they grew from mouth to mouth in the very act of dancing; individual dancers adding verse to verse, and the frequent refrain coming in as a kind of chorus. Gesture and, to a certain extent, acting would naturally accompany so free and general an expression of community feeling. There was no poet, because all were poets. To quote Professor ten Brink once more:—

"Song and playing were cultivated by peasants, and even by freedmen and serfs. At beer-feasts the harp went from hand to hand. Herein lies the essential difference between that age and our own. The result of poetical activity was not the property and was not the production of a single person, but of the community. The work of the individual endured only as long as its delivery lasted. He gained personal

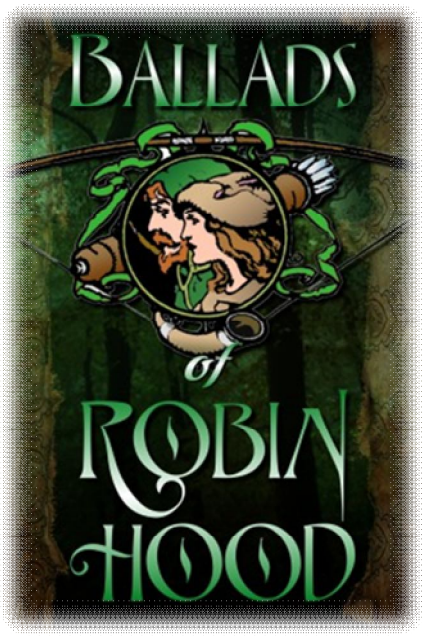
distinction only as a virtuoso. The permanent elements of what he presented, the material, the ideas, even the style and metre, already existed. 'The work of the singer was only a ripple in the stream of national poetry. Who can say how much the individual contributed to it, or where in his poetical recitation memory ceased and creative impulse began! In any case the work of the individual lived on only as the ideal possession of the aggregate body of the people, and it soon lost the stamp of originality. In view of such a development of poetry, we must assume a time when the collective consciousness of a people or race is paramount in its unity; when the intellectual life of each is nourished from the same treasury of views and associations, of myths and sagas; when similar interests stir each breast; and the ethical judgment of all applies itself to the same standard. In such an age the form of poetical expression will also be common to all, necessarily solemn, earnest, and simple."

When the conditions which produced the popular ballads become clear to the imagination, their depth of rootage, not only in the community life but in the community love, becomes also clear. We under stand the charm which these old songs have for us of a later age, and the spell which they cast upon men and women who knew the secret of their birth; we understand why the minstrels of the lime, when popular poetry was in its best estate, were held in such honour, why Taillefer sang the song of Roland at the head of the advancing Normans on the day of Hastings, and why good Bishop Aldhelm, when he wanted to get the ears of his people, stood on the bridge and sang a ballad! These old songs were the flowering of the imagination of the people; they drew their life as directly from the general experience, the common memory, the universal feelings, as did the Greek dramas in those primitive times, when they were part of rustic festivity and worship. The popular ballads have passed away with the conditions which produced them. Modern poets have, in several instances, written ballads of striking picturesqueness

and power, but as unlike the ballad of popular origin as the world of to-day is unlike the world in which "Chevy Chase" was first sung. These modern ballads are not necessarily better or worse than their predecessors; but they are necessarily different. It is idle to exalt the wild flower at the expense of the garden flower; each has its fragrance, its beauty, its sentiment; and the world is wide!

In the selection of the ballads which appear in this volume, no attempt has been made to follow a chronological order or to enforce a rigid principle of selection of any kind. The aim has been to bring within moderate compass a collection of these songs of the people which should fairly represent the range, the descriptive felicity, the dramatic power, and the genuine poetic feeling of a body of verse which is still, it is to be feared, unfamiliar to a large number of those to whom it would bring refreshment and delight.

Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne



When shaws beene sheene, and shradds full fayre,
And leaves both large and longe,
Itt is merrye walkyng in the fayre forrest
To heare the small birdes songe.

The woodweele sang, and wold not cease,
Sitting upon the spraye,
Soe lowde, he wakened Robin Hood,
In the greenwood where he lay.

"Now, by my faye," sayd jollye Robin,
"A sweaven I had this night;
I dreamt me of tow wighty yemen,
That fast with me can fight.

"Methought they did mee beate and binde,
And tooke my bow mee froe;
Iff I be Robin alive in this lande,
Ile be wroken on them towe."

"Sweavens are swift, master," quoth John,
"As the wind that blowes ore the hill;
For if itt be never so loude this night,
To-morrow it may be still."

"Buske yee, bowne yee, my merry men all,
And John shall goe with mee,
For Ile goe seeke yond wight yeomen,
In greenwood where the bee."

Then they cast on their gownes of grene,
And tooke theyr bowes each one;
And they away to the greene forrest
A shooting forth are gone;

Untill they came to the merry greenwood,
Where they had gladdest to bee;
There were they ware of a wight yeoman,
His body leaned to a tree.

A sword and a dagger he wore by his side,
Of manye a man the bane;
And he was clad in his capull hyde,
Topp and tayll and mayne.

"Stand you still, master," quoth Little John,
"Under this tree so grene,
And I will go to yond wight yeoman
To know what he doth meane."

"Ah! John, by me thou settest noe store,
And that I farley finde:
How offt send I my men beffore,
And tarry my selfe behinde!

"It is no cunning a knave to ken,
And a man but heare him speake;
And itt were not for bursting of my bowe,
John, I thy head wold breake."

As often wordes they breeden bale,
So they parted Robin and John;
And John is gone to Barnesdale;
The gates he knoweth eche one.

But when he came to Barnesdale,
Great heavinesse there hee hadd,
For he found tow of his owne fell wes
Were slaine both in a slade.

And Scarlette he was flying a-foote

Faste over stocke and stone,
For the sheriffe with seven score men
Fast after him is gone.

"One shoote now I will shoote," quoth John,
"With Christ his might and mayne;
Ile make yond fellow that flyes soe fast,
To stopp he shall be fayne."

Then John bent up his long bende-bowe,
And fetteled him to shoote:
The bow was made of tender boughe,
And fell down to his foote.

"Woe worth, woe worth thee, wicked wood,
That ere thou grew on a tree;
For now this day thou art my bale,
My boote when thou shold bee."

His shoote it was but loosely shott,
Yet flewe not the arrowe in vaine,
For itt mett one of the sherriffes men,
Good William a Trent was slaine.

It had bene better of William a Trent
To have bene abed with sorrowe,
Than to be that day in the green-wood slade
To meet with Little Johns arrowe.

But as it is said, when men be mett
Fyve can doe more than three,
The sheriffe hath taken Little John,
And bound him fast to a tree.

"Thou shalt be drawen by dale and downe,
And hanged hye on a hill."

"But thou mayst fayle of thy purpose," quoth John,
"If itt be Christ his will."

Lett us leave talking of Little John,
And thinke of Robin Hood,
How he is gone to the wight yeoman,
Where under the leaves he stood.

"Good morrowe, good fellowe," sayd Robin so fayre,
"Good morrowe, good fellow," quoth he.
"Methinks by this bowe thou beares in thy hande,
A good archere thou sholdst bee."

"I am wilfulle of my waye," quo' the yeoman,
"And of my morning tyde:"
"Ile lead thee through the wood," sayd Robin,
"Good fellow, Ile be thy guide."

"I seeke an outlawe," the straunger sayd,
"Men call him Robin Hood;
Rather Ild meet with that proud outlawe
Than fortye pound soe good."

"Now come with me, thou wight yeman,
And Robin thou soone shalt see;
But first let us some pastime find
Under the greenwood tree.

"First let us some masterye make
Among the woods so even;
We may chance to meet with Robin Hood
Here att some unsett steven."

They cutt them down two summer shroggs,
That grew both under a breere,
And set them threescore rood in twaine,

To shoote the prickes y-fere.

"Leade on, good fellowe," quoth Robin Hood,
"Leade on, I doe bidd thee."
"Nay, by my faith, good fellowe," hee sayd,
"My leader thou shalt bee."

The first time Robin shot at the pricke,
He mist but an inch it fro;
The yeoman he was an archer good,
But he cold never shoote soe.

The second shoote had the wightye yeoman,
He shote within the garlande;
But Robin he shott far better than hee,
For he clave the good pricke-wande.

"A blessing upon thy heart," he sayd,
"Good fellowe, thy shooting is goode
For an thy hart be as good as thy hand,
Thou wert better then Robin Hoode.

Now tell me thy name, good fellowe," sayd he,
"Under the leaves of lyne."
"Nay, by my faith," quoth bolde Robin,
"Till thou have told me thine."

"I dwell by dale and downe," quoth hee,
"And Robin to take Ime sworne;
And when I am called by my right name,
I am Guy of good Gisbrne."

He that had neither beene kithe nor kin,
Might have seen a full fayre sight,
To see how together these yeomen went
With blades both browne and bright:

To see how these yeomen together they fought
Two howres of a summers day,
Yett neither Robin Hood nor Sir Guy
Them fettled to flye away.

Robin was reachles on a roote,
And stumbled at that tyde;
And Guy was quicke and nimble with-all,
And hitt him ore the left side.

"Ah, deere Lady," sayd Robin Hood tho,
"Thou art but mother and may';
I think it was never mans destinye
To dye before his day."

Robin thought on Our Ladye deere,
And soone leapt up againe,
And strait he came with a 'backward' stroke,
And he Sir Guy hath slayne.

He took Sir Guy's head by the hayre,
And stuck itt upon his bowes end:
"Thou hast beene a traytor all thy liffe,
Which thing must have an end."

Robin pulled forth an Irish kniffe,
And nicked Sir Guy in the face,
That he was never on woman born
Cold tell whose head it was.

Sayes, "Lye there, lye there now, Sir Guy,
And with me be not wrothe;
Iff thou have had the worst strokes at my hand,
Thou shalt have the better clothe."

Robin did off his gowne of greene,
And on Sir Guy did throwe,
And hee put on that capull hyde,
That cladd him topp to toe.

"The bowe, the arrowes, and litle horne,
Now with me I will beare;
For I will away to Barnesdale,
To see how my men doe fare."

Robin Hood sett Guy's horne to his mouth,
And a loud blast in it did blow:
That beheard the sheriffe of Nottingham,
As he leaned under a lowe.

"Hearken, hearken," sayd the sheriffe,
"I heare nowe tydings good,
For yonder I heare Sir Guy's horne blowe,
And he hath slaine Robin Hoode.

"Yonder I heare Sir Guy's horne blowe,
Itt blowes soe well in tyde,
And yonder comes that wightye yeoman,
Cladd in his capull hyde.

"Come hyther, come hyther, thou good Sir Guy,
Aske what thou wilt of mee."
"O I will none of thy gold," sayd Robin,
"Nor I will none of thy fee.

"But now I have slaine the master," he sayes,
"Let me goe strike the knave;
For this is all the rewarde I aske.
Nor noe other will I have."

"Thou art a madman," said the sheriffe,
"Thou sholdst have had a knightes fee;
But seeing thy asking hath beene soe bad,
Well granted it shale be."

When Little John heard his master speake,
Well knewe he it was his steven;
"Now shall I be looset," quoth Little John,
"With Christ his might in heaven."

Fast Robin hee hyed him to Little John,
He thought to loose him belive:
The sheriffe and all his companye
Fast after him can drive.

"Stand abacke, stand abacke," sayd Robin;
"Why draw you mee so neere?
Itt was never the use in our countrye,
Ones shrift another shold heere."

But Robin pulled forth an Irysh knife,
And losed John hand and foote,
And gave him Sir Guy's bow into his hand,
And bade it be his boote.

Then John he took Guy's bow in his hand,

His boltes and arrowes eche one:
When the sheriffe saw Little John bend his bow,
He fettled him to be gone.

Towards his house in Nottingham towne
He fled full fast away,
And soe did all the companye,
Not one behind wold stay.

But he cold neither runne soe fast,
Nor away soe fast cold ryde,
But Little John with an arrowe soe broad
He shott him into the 'backe'-syde.

Robin Hood's Death and Burial

When Robin Hood and Little John
Down a down, a down, a down,
Went o'er yon bank of broom,
Said Robin Hood to Little John,
"We have shot for many a pound:
Hey down, a down, a down.

"But I am not able to shoot one shot more,
My arrows will not flee;
But I have a cousin lives down below,
Please God, she will bleed me."

Now Robin is to fair Kirkley gone,
As fast as he can win;
But before he came there, as we do hear,

He was taken very ill.

And when that he came to fair Kirkley-hall,
He knocked all at the ring,
But none was so ready as his cousin herself
For to let bold Robin in.

"Will you please to sit down, cousin Robin," she said,
"And drink some beer with me?"
"No, I will neither eat nor drink,
Till I am blooded by thee."

"Well, I have a room, cousin Robin," she said,
"Which you did never see;
And if you please to walk therein,
You blooded by me shall be."

She took him by the lily-white hand,
And led him to a private room;
And there she blooded bold Robin Hood,
Whilst one drop of blood would run.

She blooded him in the vein of the arm,
And locked him up in the room;
There did he bleed all the live-long day,
Until the next day at noon.

He then bethought him of a casement door,
Thinking for to begone;
He was so weak he could not leap,
Nor he could not get down.

He then bethought him of his bugle-horn,
Which hung low down to his knee,
He set his horn unto his mouth,

And blew out weak blasts three.

Then Little John, when hearing him,
As he sat under the tree,
"I fear my master is near dead,
He blows so wearily."

Then Little John to Fair Kirkley is gone,
As fast as he can dree;
But when he came to Kirkley-hall,
He broke locks two or three;

Until he came bold Robin to,
Then he fell on his knee;
"A boon, a boon," cries Little John,
"Master, I beg of thee."

"What is that boon," quoth Robin Hood,
"Little John, thou begst of me?"
"It is to burn fair Kirkley-hall,
And all their nunnery."

"Now nay, now nay," quoth Robin Hood,
"That boon I'll not grant thee;
I never hurt woman in all my life,
Nor man in woman's company.

"I never hurt fair maid in all my time,
Nor at my end shall it be;
But give me my bent bow in my hand,
And a broad arrow I'll let flee;
And where this arrow is taken up,
There shall my grave digged be.
"Lay me a green sod under my head,
And another under my feet;
And lay my bent bow by my side,

Which was my music sweet;
And make my grave of gravel and green,
Which is most right and meet.

"Let me have length and breadth enough,
With a green sod under my head;
That they may say when I am dead,
Here lies bold Robin Hood."

These words they readily promised him,
Which did bold Robin please;
And there they buried bold Robin Hood,
Near to the fair Kirkleys.

The Twa Corbies

As I was walking all alane,
I heard twa corbies making a maen:
The tane unto the t'ither did say,
"Whaur shall we gang and dine the day?"

"O doun beside yon auld fail dyke,
I wot there lies a new-slain knight;
And naebody kens that he lies there
But his hawk, his hound, and his lady fair.

"His hound is to the hunting gane,
His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame,
His lady's ta'en another mate,
Sae we may mak' our dinner sweet.

"O we'll sit on his white hause bane,
And I'll pyke out his bonny blue e'en;

Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair
We'll theek our nest when it blaws bare.

"Mony a ane for him makes maen,
But nane shall ken whaur he is gane.
Over his banes when they are bare,
The wind shall blaw for evermair."

Waly, Waly, Love be Bonny

A SCOTTISH SONG

O waly, waly up the bank,
And waly, waly down the brae,
And waly, waly yon burn side,
Where I and my love were wont to gae.
I leant my back unto an aik,
I thought it was a trusty tree;
But first it bow'd, and syne it brak,
Sae my true love did lichtly me.

O waly, waly, but gin love be bonny,
A little time while it is new;
But when its auld, it waxeth cauld,
And fades awa' like morning dew.
O wherfore shuld I busk my head?
Or wherfore shuld I kame my hair?
For my true love has me forsook,
And says he'll never loe me mair.

Now Arthur-Seat sall be my bed,

The sheets shall neir be prest by me:
Saint Anton's well sall be my drink,
Since my true love has forsaken me.
Marti'mas wind, when wilt thou blaw,
And shake the green leaves aff the tree?
O gentle death, when wilt thou cum?
For of my life I am wearɘe.

'Tis not the frost that freezes fell,
Nor blawing snaws inclemencɘe;
'Tis not sic cauld that makes me cry,
But my love's heart grown cauld to me.
Whan we came in by Glasgow town,
We were a comely sight to see;
My love was clad in black velvet,
And I myself in cramasɘe.

But had I wist, before I kist,
That love had been sae ill to win,
I had lockt my heart in a case of gowd,
And pinnd it with a siller pin.
And, oh! that my young babe were born,
And set upon the nurse's knee,
And I myself were dead and gane!
And the green grass growing over me.

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